France in Sweden's Foreign Policy in the Era of Gustav III's Reign (1771-1792)

Zbigniew Anusik

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INTRODUCTION

For the first time I came across Gustav III's biography in the early eighties of the previous century when I started to write a biography of Jerzy Michał Potocki for the "Polski słownik biograficzny". My adventure with the history of Sweden resulted in a doctoral dissertation devoted to a history of Polish diplomatic mission in Stockholm in the years 1789–1795. At that time, I realised that Gustav III was almost completely unknown to the Polish historiography¹. Władysław Konopczyński, the then most eminent expert in Swedish affairs, wrote relatively most about that ruler. He praised him for a coup d'état of 1772, appreciated internal reforms carried out during Gustav III's reign, paid tribute to the courage with which the king opposed Russia but totally ignored two, most important for me facts. He did not pay much attention to the King of Sweden's attempts to both, get the Polish crown after Stanisław August and organise a monarchic crusade against revolutionary France. While describing the policy of Gustav III in the last period of his reign Konopczyński wrote: "it was difficult to admit the naked truth that soon after Svensksund, the entire pillar of Gustav III's policy turned, like a flag, from the East to the West. The king flew on the wings of a fantastic candidature only to fall at the feet of Catherine the Great and dream his last dream of a royalist crusade against the Jacobins in her service. A place of friendship and sympathy towards Poland was occupied by lust. Driven by a desire for fame and power, incited by that squirt and schemer Armfelt, he was trying to reproach Russia, forgetting at the same time about Finland. Thus, he was hammering a sword for the Dane or Prussian for the spring of 1791 when the tsarina needed material and moral support most. He was initiating the tsarina into his dreams of the Polish throne, he was maliciously receiving deceitful incentives from her while exposing himself to ridicule and mockery... In a word, he entered the path that was to lead him to the reactionary alliance with Russia (in October 1791), right

¹ See Z. Anusik, *Potocki Jerzy Michał*, in: *Polski słownik biograficzny*, vol. XXVIII, Wrocław 1984–1985, pp. 44–47; idem, *Misja polska w Sztokholmie w latach 1789–1795*, Łódź 1993.

into the arms of the empress's new envoy, famous Stackelberg. A follower of Charles XII was turning into a copy of Augustus the Strong!"².

Although Gustav III's efforts to get the Jagiellonian and Vasa crown have been already described in a contemporary Polish historiography³, the king's attitude towards revolutionary France has long been almost completely unknown. Emanuel Rostworowski, in his fundamental synthesis of the history of the eighteenth century, described the whole problem with one sentence: "Once again the Swedish king got closer to Catherine II and, loosening reins of the fantasy, he was dreaming about getting the Polish throne or leading the crusade against revolutionary France"⁴. Also Ludwik Bazyłow, while considering the possible intervention of foreign powers wrote in defence of Louis XVI in a chapter on the history of the French Revolution what follows: "Probably most inclined to take up suitable steps was the Swedish king, Gustav III (1771–1792), the ruler who had re-established an absolute power of the monarch in his country but did not enjoy it too long as he was killed by a conspirator in March 1792"⁵. Although Rostworowski and Bazyłow shortly mentioned the issue of our interest, the problem completely escaped Mieczysław Żywczyński's attention⁶. We should not be surprised by the attitude of the author of a synthesis of the general history, though, as Adam Kersten, who had comprehensively described the history of Sweden, did not pay much attention to it either, mentioning the problem marginally in a completely unexpected place of his work⁷. The fact that Gustav III's

² See W. Konopczyński, *Polska a Szwecja. Od pokoju oliwskiego do upadku Rzeczypospolitej 1660–1795*, Warszawa 1924, pp. 245–246. We should also emphasise the significant fact that Bronisław Dembiński, an author of a valuable work on the history of Russian-French relations at the beginning of the revolution, almost completely ignored Gustav III's policy on revolutionary France. See idem, *Rosya a Rewolucya Francuska*, Kraków 1896.

³ See Z. Anusik, *O polską koronę. Dwór sztokholmski wobec kwestii sukcesji tronu w Polsce w dobie Sejmu Czteroletniego*, in: *Studia i materiały z dziejów nowożytnych*, K. Matwijowski, S. Ochmann-Staniszevska (eds), *Prace historyczne XIII*, Wrocław 1995, pp. 147–167; idem, *Szwedzki rywal Fryderyka Augusta. Gustaw III wobec projektów sukcesji tronu w Polsce w latach 1790–1792*, "Rocznik Łódzki", vol. XLIV, 1997, pp. 89–115.

⁴ See E. Rostworowski, *Historia powszechna. Wiek XVIII*, Warszawa 1977, p. 754.

⁵ See L. Bazyłow, *Historia powszechna 1789–1918*, Warszawa 1981, p. 56. Quite a confusing statement of Jarema Maciszewski is worth mentioning here as he wrote of Gustav III that: "In last years of his reign, suffering from symptoms of a mental illness, he was presenting projects on a monarchic crusade against revolutionary France. A conspiracy of officers was formed against him. One of the conspirators stabbed the king on March 29, 1792". See idem, *Historia powszechna. Wiek Oświecenia*, Warszawa 1985, p. 101. None of the King of Sweden's biographers has ever mentioned his mental problems. What is more, although Gustav III died indeed on March 29, 1792, he did not die of the dagger but complications that occurred few days after he had been shot with a gun by one of the conspirators (the date of the attack dates to March 16, 1792).

⁶ See M. Żywczyński, *Historia powszechna 1789–1870*, 4th ed., Warszawa 1977.

⁷ Referring to the events that took place after the death of Gustav III, A. Kersten wrote that: "The foreign policy of Reuterholm and a new Chancellor Fredrik Sparre was cautious. When

attempts to organise a great monarchic crusade against rebellious subjects of Louis XVI had not been noticed by Polish historians interested in the history of the French Revolution seems to be equally interesting. Gustav III's name did not appear in the synthesis of the history of France by Jan Baszkiewicz⁸. In his biography of Louis XVI Baszkiewicz superficially mentioned the Swedish ruler and ironically described him as the "king-knight" who had had a great desire to personally fight a dragon of the revolution but he had wanted to know in advance who would pay him for it⁹. Similar opinions were repeated by Baszkiewicz in a comprehensive synthesis of the history of the French Revolution that he wrote together with Stefan Meller¹⁰. It is worth mentioning that also Albert Mathiez, an eminent French historian and the author of a history of the French Revolution, regarded Gustav III's actions in almost the same way¹¹. Other French researchers (excluding L. Leouzon Le Duc, A. Geffroy or C. Nordmann) did not pay much attention to actions of the "knight-errant" from the North, either¹².

As the issue in question was not interesting for Polish historians or the French ones (except for A. Geffroy and C. Nordmann), it was obvious to me that the problem must have been noticed in the Swedish historiography. Yet, my preliminary survey of the library holdings brought about very limited results. Certainly, I cannot take into account numerous references scattered in different historical works stating that Gustav III was interested in revolutionary France and planned to intervene in internal affairs of that country.

renouncing plans of great and legitimate crusade Gustav III had been dreaming of, Reuterholm maintained contacts with the French emigrants and, at the same time, he tried to reproach French revolutionary governments". See idem, *Historia Szwecji*, Wrocław 1973, p. 288.

⁸ See J. Baszkiewicz, *Historia Francji*, 2nd ed., Wrocław 1978.

⁹ See idem, *Ludwik XVI*, Wrocław 1983, p. 233.

¹⁰ See J. Baszkiewicz, S. Meller, *Rewolucja francuska 1789–1794. Społeczeństwo obywatelskie*, Warszawa 1983, pp. 322, 328.

¹¹ While describing an international situation at the turn of 1790 and 1791, A. Mathiez wrote what follows: "The Swedish king, a knight-errant of God's grace, was making a peace with Russia and, having installed in Spa, sent Louis XVI words of encouragement". See idem, *La Révolution française*, vol. I (*La chute de la royauté 1787–1792*), Paris 1928, p. 162; idem, *Rewolucja francuska*, Warszawa 1956, pp. 148–149.

¹² See L. Villat, *La Révolution et l'Empire (1789–1815)*, vol. I (*Les Assemblées révolutionnaires*), Paris 1947, p. 154. In an enclosed here, rather extensive bibliography, there is only one classic work on issues interesting for me. Swedish-French relations during Gustav III's reign were described (not in details, though) in works of two above-mentioned French historians. See L. Leouzon Le Duc, *Les couronnes sanglantes: Gustave III*, Paris 1861; C. Nordmann, *Gustave III. Un démocrate couronné*, Lille 1986, pp. 225–241 (Chapter XIII: *La Suède et La Révolution française*). It is worth mentioning that Albert Sorel's main work (*L'Europe et la révolution française*, vol. I–VIII, Paris 1885–1904) describes only basic facts regarding Swedish matters. It could result from the fact that another French historian, Auguste Geffroy, had already described then the Swedish-French relations during Gustav III's reign. With regard to that last point see my comments in the text below as well as note 15.

From my point of view it was important to find a monograph which would comprehensively describe the issue in question. The only work on that subject proved to be Nils Åkeson's dissertation published in the mid-eighties of the nineteenth century¹³. In his relatively extensive, two-volume work he discussed Swedish-French diplomatic relations in the era of revolution (in the years 1789–1792), using both, Gustav III's correspondence and messages of Swedish diplomats accredited to various European courts. As Åkeson had established basic facts concerning the mentioned issue, there was little to add in that regard by his continuators. Still, he focused on negotiations of Gustav's diplomacy with major European capitals, scarcely paying attention to the content of the messages of Gustav III's correspondents. Nils Åkeson did not attempt to illustrate the wider background of those events in terms of both, internal affairs of France and Sweden and the situation in the international arena, either. Moreover, not all his views can be approved of today. Nevertheless, he used the most important documents in his work and enclosed a number of valuable source materials to it, which certainly is the greatest advantage of his book. Åkeson's research was continued, to some extent, by the best expert on the French Revolution in the history of Swedish historiography, Alma Söderhjelm. In the first volume of her monograph on the history of the Swedish-French relations in the era of the revolution she returned to the research subject of the previous author¹⁴. Unlike him, however, Söderhjelm described the problem in more details, using not only diplomatic reports but also personal correspondence, diaries and newspaper articles. This was done so since she tried, in fact, to comprehensively describe relations between both, countries and societies. The biggest advantage of Alma Söderhjelm's book is, however, the fact that she had an access to French archives and could make use of messages sent by French Ministers of Foreign Affairs as well as reports written from Stockholm by envoys of the Most Christian King.

It should be noted, however, that neither Nils Åkeson nor Alma Söderhjelm were first researchers who described the Swedish-French relations during the revolution. An undisputed leader in this field is an eminent French historian, Auguste Geffroy, who in 1867 published an important book on Gustav III's politics with regard to France¹⁵. In it, he published a series of relevant source documents which were later used by researchers of next generations who were dealing with that problem. The above-mentioned works are the only monographs that describe (in full or in a substantial part) mutual

¹³ See N. Åkeson, *Gustaf III:s förhållande till franska revolutionen*, vol. I–II, Lund 1885–1886.

¹⁴ See A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige och den franska revolutionen. Bidrag till kännedom om Sveriges och Frankrikes inbördes förhållande i slutet av 1700-talet*, vol. I (*Gustav III:s tid*), Stockholm 1920.

¹⁵ See A. Geffroy, *Gustave III et la cour de France. Suivi d'une étude critique sur Marie-Antoinette et Louis XVI apocryphes*, vol. I–II, Paris 1867.

relations between Sweden and France during the revolution. Still, I do not mention here an article of Erland Hjärne as it is rather a summary of the arguments of three above-mentioned authors¹⁶. Other researchers were interested in the Swedish-French relations only at the margins of their main interests. Firstly, we should mention Olof Jägerskiöld, an author of a synthetic but well-written and thorough history of the Swedish diplomacy and its foreign policy in the years 1721–1792¹⁷. Nor can we forget about the outdated but valuable because of the source material it contains work by L. Manderström on Gustav III's foreign policy in last two years of his reign¹⁸. We should also look closer at several biographies of the king in question. In my opinion, works of Beth Hennings seem to be the most interesting, although the authoress does not pay much attention to the issues most important for my research¹⁹. Thus, much more interesting seems to be, unfortunately rather outdated today, a book by R.N. Bain²⁰. A biography of the King of Sweden written by the already mentioned Claude Nordmann should also be enlisted among important works of the above-mentioned authors²¹. Gustav III's biography by Erik Lönnroth, in turn, is completely disappointing²². The author was ironic and critical about his protagonist and he questioned the legitimacy of the majority of his actions, totally criticising all his achievements.

While reviewing the literature devoted to a greater or smaller extent to Gustav III's policy on revolutionary France I came to the conclusion that there are still many research possibilities for me in that field. Yet, I was well aware of the fact that it would be the most important for me to use appropriate source material when researching. I did not intend to follow the paths of my predecessors, though. Therefore, I decided to define the topic of my dissertation in such a way so as to do research on the basis of materials which I had an access to but without giving up an attempt to solve the problem that had been a research inspiration for me for some time. The final version of the topic was agreed upon during my second stay in Stockholm, that is in the autumn of 1992. It was decided then that without sacrificing a description of overall diplomatic relations between Sweden and France

¹⁶ See E. Hjärne, *Gustaf III och franska revolutionen*, "Svensk Tidskrift", vol. XIX, 1929, pp. 502–522.

¹⁷ See O. Jägerskiöld, *Den svenska utrikespolitikens historia*, vol. II, part 2 (1721–1792), Stockholm 1957.

¹⁸ See L. Manderström, *Om Gustaf III:s yttre politik under två senaste åren af dess regering*, Stockholm 1859.

¹⁹ See B. Hennings, *Gustav III. En biografi*, Stockholm 1957; eadem, *Gustav III*, in: *Svenskt Biografiskt Lexikon*, vol. XVII, Stockholm 1967–1969, pp. 458–473.

²⁰ See R.N. Bain, *Gustavus III and his Contemporaries 1746–1792. An Overlooked Chapter of Eighteenth Century History*, vol. I–II, London 1894.

²¹ See C. Nordmann, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

²² See E. Lönnroth, *Den stora rollen. Kung Gustaf III spelad av honom själv*, Stockholm 1986.

during Gustav III's reign I would concentrate on the Swedish diplomacy's attitude towards the crisis of the monarchy in France between 1787–1792. Such a chronological framework of my research seemed by all means justified. The year 1787 was, in fact, a clear turning point in the history of France. A revolt of the privileged, which was a prelude to a future revolution, was started at that time. In February Louis XVI's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Charles Gravier, Count of Vergennes who for a long time had been trying to prevent Gustav III from entangling Sweden in an international conflict, died. The King of Sweden, deprived of an influence of his powerful mentor but aware of the ongoing internal crisis in France, was free to manoeuvre as he wished, although he had lost the then most important ally of his country. Soon, he significantly activated his foreign policy and led to the outbreak of war with Russia in the summer of 1788. The end date should not be surprising, either. On August 10, 1792 Louis XVI was overthrown in France. The ongoing crisis of the monarchy led to its final collapse and a proclamation of the republic. Yet, a man who for years had been trying to save French monarchical institutions from decomposition did not have the opportunity to witness those events. This was so since Gustav III was assassinated in March 1792. The death of the king is an important turning point of my research.

It is obvious that Gustav III is the central figure and the main reference point in my work. He is not the only character of it, though. The main aim of my research was, in fact, to describe the Swedish diplomacy's attitude towards the events occurring in France. For that reason I was interested not only in the king as the head of the foreign policy of his country but also all those people who were the monarch's subjects and co-workers. I was not able to read all diplomatic reports which had been sent to Stockholm at that time. Thus, I was forced to carefully select the source material. I assumed that reports of those diplomats who had had a direct contact with Gustav III's policy on France would be crucial for me. Among people from the ruler's retinue I chose Evert Taube, an informal Minister of Foreign Affairs in Sweden since the end of the war with Russia. His correspondence proved to include much valuable information about Gustav III's political plans. I also used messages and letters written by such diplomats as Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein, Carl Gustaf Schultz von Ascheraden and Erik Bergstedt (Paris), Hans Axel von Fersen (Vienna, Prague and Brussels), Gotthard Mauritz von Rehausen (Turin), Carl Gustaf Oxenstierna (Koblenz), Carl August Ehrens-vård (Madrid) and Curt von Stedingk (St. Petersburg). I have deliberately omitted diplomatic reports from Copenhagen, London, Vienna, Berlin, the Hague, Warsaw (I used them while writing a monograph on the Polish mission in Stockholm) and Regensburg as I concluded (Nils Åkeson came to

a similar conclusion, too) that diplomats accredited to those courts had limited influence on Gustav III's policy on France and were certainly kept in the dark about the king's plans and intentions towards that country. In total, I read and thoroughly analysed several thousand letters and diplomatic messages which gave me a good insight into the issues studied²³. I also have to underline that while reading those materials I was not only interested in determining the sequence of facts and negotiations of Swedish diplomats. Their opinions, views, predictions and assessments were either equally or even more important for me. A position of individual representatives of the Swedish foreign service towards events occurring in France is, in fact, one of the most important aspects of this book.

At this point, I feel obliged to give one more explanation. Although the main aim of my dissertation is to describe Gustav III's policy on France during his whole reign, I concentrated mostly on actions taken by the king and his diplomats in years 1787–1792. While presenting extensive excerpts from messages sent to Stockholm I want to pay special attention to numerous factors that must have influenced Gustav's decisions. Those were opinions and views of his associates that were creating the king's ideas of what was happening in France. There were the diplomats who tried to advise the king on detailed solutions regarding that or the other matter. Finally, there were Gustav III's envoys who were deliberating on developments in the international arena. Undoubtedly, the king was influenced by a content of messages sent to him. On the other hand, he shaped attitudes of his subjects as he was giving them numerous tips and instructions. The vast majority of Gustav's diplomats seemed to share their ruler's views. Some of them (Hans Axel von Fersen, Evert Taube, Curt von Stedingk) supported the king's policy without reservation. Most of them obediently fulfilled his orders. Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein was an exception, though, as he used to oppose Stockholm court's views on some cases. Such an attitude of an Ambassador to Paris resulted in his being discreetly supervised by successive secretaries of legation and then being recalled from the post. It is also worth noting that reports sent to Stockholm have never described French problems separately from developments in the international arena. It was even more justified as at some point Sweden turned from a passive observer of events into an active participant of complicated power games who tried to adapt its policy to the rapidly changing situation in the country. For that reason, I decided to describe the above-mentioned issues in the wider background. Thus, while writing about Swedish diplomacy's position towards France I do not discuss the issue alone. I describe such problems as e.g. Gustav III's attempts to get the Polish crown. I also pay attention to Stockholm court's relations with

²³ A detailed list of source materials used in the book is enclosed in a final part of the dissertation entitled *Sources and studies*.

other countries, especially those that were regarded by the king as potential allies in a work of rescuing the French monarchy. I should clearly state, however, that it was not my intention to write the history of France, the history of Sweden or the history of the French Revolution anew. That is why I made the definitely selective choice of facts. I am writing about all these issues that should be introduced in this book as they provide a suitable background for my story. Thus, a selection of the main literature is rather arbitrary. My arguments on secondary issues of the research are based on classic works on the core of the matter. I clearly prefer Swedish titles to works of French authors. It is not due to the fact that the author has a better knowledge of the Swedish historiography but because of the adoption of the rule not to concentrate on well-known issues and thoroughly discussed in a literature that is relatively easy to obtain.

The final definition of the topic and clarification of its chronological framework made me use other, not included in the first phase of the query, valuable and useful source materials and studies. First of all, I should mention diplomatic correspondence of Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein and the collection of letters, messages and other materials of Hans Axel von Fersen and Curt von Stedingk²⁴. Yet, all three monumental editions did not significantly broaden the source material of my work. The vast majority of the materials presented here was well-known to me from a previous reading of manuscript collections of the Stockholm Riksarkivet. Publications including Gustav III's letters and instructions proved, in turn, to significantly complement my archival research²⁵. Hans Axel von Fersen's diary published by Alma Söderhjelm is a very valuable source material²⁶. A lot of interesting

²⁴ See *Correspondance diplomatique du baron de Staël-Holstein ambassadeur de Suède en France et de son successeur comme chargé d'affaires le baron Brinkman. Documents inédits sur la révolution (1783–1799) recueillis aux Archives Royales de Suède*, L. Leouzou Le Duc (ed.), Paris 1881; *Le comte de Fersen et la cour de France. Extraits des papiers du grand maréchal de Suède, comte Jean Axel de Fersen*, R.M. Klinckowström (ed.), vol. I–II, Paris 1877–1878; *La Comtesse Brevern De la Gardie, Un Ambassadeur de Suède a la cour de Catherine II. Field-Maréchal comte de Stedingk. Choix de dépêches diplomatiques, rapports secrets et lettres particulières de 1790 à 1796*, vol. I–II, Stockholm 1919.

²⁵ See especially *Collection des écrits politiques, littéraires et dramatiques de Gustave III, roi de Suède, suivie de son correspondance*, J.B. de Chaux (ed.), vol. I, Stockholm 1803; E.G. Geijer, *Konung Gustaf III:s efterlämnade och femtio år efter hans död öppnade papper*, Uppsala 1843; *Gustave III par ses lettres*, G. v. Proschwitz (ed.), Stockholm-Paris 1986; *Kon. Gustaf III:s bref till Riks-Drotsen grefve Carl Axel Wachtmeister och Statssekreteraren Ulric Gustaf Franc*, G. Andersson (ed.), Örebro 1860; *Konung Gustaf III:s bref till friherre G.M. Armfelt*, E. Tegnér (ed.), in: *Historiska Handlingar*, vol. XII, Stockholm 1883, pp. 1–202; *Konung Gustaf III:s skrifter in politiska och vittra amnen tillika med dess brevexling*, vol. I, Stockholm 1806; *Ögonvitten om Gustav III*, B. Hennings (ed.), Stockholm 1960.

²⁶ See *Axel von Fersens dagbok*, A. Söderhjelm (ed.), vol. I, Stockholm 1925. It is, in fact, a very distinctive source publication as fragments of the diary illustrate Fersen's quite popular

information on the subject in question could be found in Carl Gustaf Nordin's diaries, too²⁷. Other printed source materials used by me provide only complementary information²⁸. Among authors of the most important and most frequently cited works in my book I had to mention H.A. Barton, J. Baszkiewicz, E. Birck, S. Carlsson, J. Godechot, B. Hennings, O. Jägerskiöld, I. de Madariaga, A. Mathiez, C.T. Odhner, A. Soboul, L. Stavenow, A. Söderhjelm, E. Tegnér and L. Villat²⁹. Arne Forssell, an author of an excellent work of the history of the Swedish diplomatic service, deserves to be mentioned separately³⁰.

Finally, I should write a few words about the structure of the dissertation itself. Its first chapter was based mainly on printed source materials and literature. It is, in fact, a synthetic introduction to the main part of the book. I discuss here Gustav III's domestic and foreign policy in the years 1771–1786, so at a time when France was the main and the only ally of Sweden in the international arena. The construction of five following chapters is classic for works on the history of diplomacy. Those chapters are constructed in a problem-chronological way. The analysis of the presented materials prevails over the synthesis, the fact which seems to be typical for works of that kind. In the second chapter I present Swedish-French relations in the period from January 1787 to May 1789. In this case, the end date is determined by the beginning of the session of the Estates-General that gathered at Versailles just at the beginning of that month. The third chapter characterises mutual relations between Sweden and France in the period from May 1789 to August 1790. It ends on the signing of the Swedish-Russian peace treaty of Värälä (on August 14, 1790). From that moment, Gustav III regained full freedom of movements and was able to pay far more of his attention to France and devote more time to its affairs. A timeframe of the fourth chapter was determined from August 1790 to June 1791. At that time, there appeared first ideas of organising by the King of Sweden an armed expedition aimed at rescuing Louis XVI and those closest to him. Then, the Swedish diplomacy actively participated in organising an escape of the royal family from Paris. In the fifth chapter, firstly I present the so-called Varennes

biography written by the authoress. I also use another edition of that diary in my book. See H. v. Fersen, *Rescue the Queen. A Diary of the French Revolution 1789–1793*, A. Carlsson, E. Elstob (eds), London 1971.

²⁷ See C.G. Nordin, *Dagboksanteckningar för åren 1786–1792*, in: *Historiska Handlingar*, vol. VI, Stockholm 1868.

²⁸ A full list of source materials used in the book is enclosed in a final part of the dissertation entitled *Sources and studies*.

²⁹ A detailed list of all studies is enclosed in a final part of the dissertation entitled *Sources and studies*.

³⁰ See A. Forssell, *Histoire de l'administration des affaires étrangères 1721–1809*, in: *Histoire de l'Administration des Affaires Étrangères de Suède*, Upsal 1940, pp. 237–363.

affair, that is a failed escape of Louis XVI from the capital, and then I analyse all its consequences for both, an internal policy of France and the international situation. At that time, Gustav III had already taken actions to create a coalition of powers directed against revolutionary France. The end date of that chapter is set up by the signing of the Swedish-Russian alliance treaty on October 19, 1791. The sixth chapter, the last and at the same time the most extensive one, describes the activities of the Swedish diplomacy from the signing of the treaty of Drottningholm to the king's death in the end of March 1792. The latter event is a closing point and a climax of the entire book.

The work was translated from Polish into English. This remark applies to all source quotes as well. I do not use quotes in Swedish as it is a language unknown for most readers living outside Sweden. I also try to limit quotes in French to a minimum and if I use them I put them in the footnotes only. All Swedish names and surnames are written down according to the Swedish version taken from biographical studies included in the "Svenskt Biografiskt Lexikon" or "Svenska Män och Kvinnor". Yet, I make an exception for members of the Swedish royal family (the wife of Charles, Duke of Södermanland, an authoress of a very interesting diary on Gustav III's reign, excluded. For the latter reason, I call her Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotta). French, German, English, Spanish, Dutch, Russian and other names or surnames are always written down in an original version. Only the names of the members of European dynastic families are translated into English. As for geographical names, English translation had an absolute priority. Only if there is no English equivalent of the name of a place do I use the original spelling. It does not apply, though, to the footnotes where a place of publication of the work (as well as other elements of a bibliographic record) is always given in a language it was written in.

There is also one more thing to add. One time I allowed myself to question the statement that "in today's historical science a reconstruction of facts, events and causal relationships between them is slowly becoming an auxiliary science of history, necessary, indispensable, highly valuable but still only auxiliary"³¹. A few years later I wrote that even on the basis of the history of diplomacy, therefore one of the oldest areas of history, this "auxiliary science" has not said its last word yet³². Also today I would support that statement without reservations. I would do it even more eagerly as, for the time being, studies of this kind are being rediscovered in Western Europe. I do not hide the fact that the publication of articles by Jörg Peter Findeisen and Munro Price at the end of the previous century made

³¹ See J. Maciszewski, *Przedmowa do wydania drugiego*, in: idem, *Szlachta polska i jej państwo*, 2nd ed., Warszawa 1986, pp. 9–10.

³² See Z. Anusik, *Misja...*, p. 10.

me finally end works on a dissertation that had been completed in the last year of the twentieth century³³.

It should be clearly emphasised here that the very book is a shortened, modified and complemented by the newest literature version of a dissertation which was published in 2000 in Polish³⁴. As it was well received by the Polish historical environment the writer felt encouraged to translate it into English.

Finally, I allow myself to thank the people and institutions without help of which neither my dissertation of 2000 nor its modified version now presented to the readers would have been ever published. First of all, I would like to thank authorities of the Swedish Institute in Stockholm which twice (in the years 1987–1988 and 1992–1993) granted me a scholarship thanks to which I was able to make an archival query in Riksarkivet in Stockholm. I address a special word of thanks to Ewa Berndtsson that during my stays in Sweden benevolently cared for me, always with friendly advice and assistance. I would also like to thank the Lanckoronski Foundation which granted me a scholarship thanks to which I could complete my research studies in Stockholm in the autumn of 1997. Nor can I omit the Stefan Batory Foundation thanks to which I could spend a month on a query in the Oxford libraries in the summer of 1996.

³³ See J.P. Findeisen, „Królewski rewolucjonista”. *Król Gustaw III u progu kapitalistycznej przebudowy szwedzkiego systemu feudalnego (1771–1792)*, „Zapiski Historyczne”, vol. LXII, 1997, issue 2–3, pp. 69–86; M. Price, *Louis XVI and Gustavus III: Secret Diplomacy and Counter-Revolution 1791–1792*, „The Historical Journal”, vol. XLII, No. 2, 1999, pp. 435–466.

³⁴ See Z. Anusik, *Dyplomacja szwedzka wobec kryzysu monarchii we Francji latach 1787–1792*, Łódź 2000.

CHAPTER ONE

THE MOST FAITHFULL ALLY OF THE VERSAILLES COURT: GUSTAV III'S REIGN BETWEEN 1771 AND 1786

PRINCE GUSTAV AND HIS RELATIONS WITH THE COURT OF VERSAILLES

Gustav III, the eldest son of Adolf Frederick von Holstein-Gottorp (King of Sweden in the years 1751–1771) and Louisa Ulrika of Prussia, was born on January 24/February 4, 1746 in Stockholm. From an early age he was strongly attached to his mother who greatly contributed to the formation of her son's personality. The little prince inherited most of his character traits from his mother's family, the Hohenzollerns of Prussia. Throughout his life he was very violent, impulsive, quick-tempered and irritable. He had a very vivid imagination. His mind was always filled with thousands projects and activities; he could never sit still in one place. He was always moving, forever experiencing eternal fervour and anxiety of the soul. Nothing was able to keep his attention for long. Another dominant feature of his character was his loyalty and sincerity towards friends. Yet, at a young age he learnt to hide his true feelings, initially in fear of his harsh and overbearing mother, and later, due to the echoes of political intrigues and violent party fighting which reached the royal court. That becoming withdrawn and hiding secrets from those around him gave one of Gustav III's biographers cause to make a conclusion that he had never taken off his mask even to himself¹.

¹ See E. Lönnroth, *Gustavus III of Sweden: the Final Years. A Political Portrait*, in: idem, *Scandinavians. Selected Historical Essays*, Göteborg 1977, p. 101. See also B. Hennings, *Gustav III*, in: *Svenskt Biografiskt Lexikon* [further on: *SBL*], vol. XVII, Stockholm 1967–1969, pp. 458–459; G. v. Proschwitz, *Introduction*, in: *Gustave III par ses lettres*, G. v. Proschwitz (ed.), Stockholm–Paris 1986, pp. 12–13.

On March 25/April 5, 1751 King of Sweden, Frederick I von Hesse-Kassel, died, the father of little Gustav ascended the throne and the latter became himself a five-year-old heir to the Swedish throne. At that time, the royal power in Sweden was much limited. In 1720 a new constitution ("form of government") had been adopted which, together with an electoral law on the organisation of the *Riksdag* dated to 1723 (that had abolished the House of the Knights' division into three separate colleges and had introduced nobility's formal equality) had laid the grounds for the political system of Sweden for the next half century, the period called by historians the "Age of Liberty" (*frihetstiden*). Both acts had greatly limited prerogatives of the crown and enabled estates to control political life of the country².

Although, formally speaking, the king retained sovereignty over the government, the *Riksdag*, composed of four estate chambers (each one consisting of the nobility, bourgeoisie, clergy and peasants), was entitled to forsake its allegiance to him. Limitations that were gradually being imposed on the crown made the ruler play the role of the President of the State Council (the Senate). Although the monarch had two votes there, he was deprived of the *veto* right and had to submit to the will of the majority of the Senate. The State Council became the highest organ of the executive power. All colleges (ministries) were subjected to it, the Chancellor College (*Kanslikollegium*), a supreme body of the state administration that was dealing with diplomacy and foreign policy, included. One of the tasks of the Chancellor College was to prepare the agenda for the Senate's meetings. The head of the College, *kanslipresident* (the President of the Chancellery), as the only chairman of colleges, was a member of the State Council where, as customary, he held the first place. He was responsible for the foreign policy as well. The Secret Committee of the *Riksdag* (*secreta deputationen*, *secreta utskottet*, *hemliga utskottet*) also played a crucial role in the government system in Sweden

² For a more detailed discussion on problems in question see C.G. Malmström, *Sveriges politiska historia från Konung Karl XII:s död till Statshövfningen 1772*, 2nd ed., vol. I, Stockholm 1893, pp. 50 and fol., 62–130, 212–272, 363–431; L. Thanner, *Revolutionen i Sverige efter Karl XII:s död. Den inre politiska maktkampen under tidigare delen av Ulrika Eleonora d.y.s regering*, Uppsala 1953; L. Stavenow, *Frihetstiden, Sveriges historia till våra dagar*, E. Hildebrand, L. Stavenow (eds), vol. IX, Stockholm 1922, pp. 3–28, 44–51, 60–76; idem, *Geschichte Schwedens 1718–1772*, *Gesamtgeschichte Schwedens*, vol. VII, Gotha 1908, pp. 23–30, 43–51, 68–77; S. Carlsson, J. Rosén, *Svensk historia*, vol. II (*Tiden efter 1718*), Stockholm 1964, pp. 91–107; C. Nordmann, *Gustave III. Un démocrate couronné*, Lille 1986, pp. 5–6; Z. Anusik, *W cieniu rosyjskiego imperium. Zarys dziejów wewnętrznych i polityki zagranicznej Szwecji w latach 1718–1751*, "Acta Universitatis Lodzianensis", Folia historica 69, Łódź 2000, pp. 5–8; W. Buchholtz describes in details a collapse of the Carolingian absolutism's structures after the death of Charles XII and a formation of the parliamentary government in Sweden. See idem, *Staat und Ständegesellschaft in Schweden zur Zeit des Überganges vom Absolutismus zum Ständeparlamentarismus 1718–1720*, "Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis", Stockholm Studies in History 27, Stockholm 1979.

between 1719 and 1723. It consisted of 100 members (50 representatives of the nobility, 25 members of the bourgeoisie and 25 representatives of the clergy) and between sessions of the Parliament it was controlling executive authorities, the State Council included. The collegiality of all magistracies and an extensive control system over executive committees of the *Riksdag* were to protect medium and small nobility against oligarchic tendencies of the old aristocracy whose representatives dominated both, the Senate and the Chancellor College. The Secret Commission was to decide on behalf of the Parliament on matters which should be kept secret. Nominally, it was allowed to control the government's activity regarding revenue, judiciary, foreign policy, public administration and army. The Secret Committee was also preparing all parliamentary bills. In fact, the *secreta deputationen* exceeded its (already wide) powers as between the meetings of the *Riksdag* it took over all its powers. That is why the Speaker (*Lantmarskalk*) of the *Riksdag's* House of the Knights, traditionally a chairman of the Secret Commission as well, was so important³.

It is obvious that in such a situation estates attempted to influence the education of the Swedish heir to the throne. One of the "Hats" leaders, Count Carl Gustaf Tessin, a distinguished scholar, connoisseur and a lover of the French culture, the Ambassador of Sweden to the court of Versailles in the

³ On a question of a detailed description of the Swedish political system at the beginning of the "Age of Liberty" see mainly F. Lagerroth, *Frihetstidens författning. En studie i den svenska konstitutionalismens historia*, Stockholm 1915; idem, *Frihetstidens maktägande ständer 1719–1772*, part 1, in: *Sveriges riksdag. Förra avdelningen riksdagens historia intill 1865*, vol. V, Stockholm 1934, pp. 9–234; J.E. Nilsson, *Borgarståndet*, in: *ibidem*, pp. 235–273; R. Olsson, *Bondeståndet*, in: *ibidem*, pp. 274–306; F. Lagerroth, *Frihetstidens maktägande ständer 1719–1772*, part 2, in: *Sveriges riksdag. Historisk och statsvetenskaplig främställning*, vol. VI, Stockholm 1934; H. Valentin, *Frihetstidens riddarhus. Några bidrag till dess karakteristik*, Stockholm 1915; E. Naumann, *Om sekreta utskottet under den tidigare frihetstiden 1719–1734. Bidrag till utskottsväsendets historia*, Stockholm 1911; S.U. Palme, *Vom Absolutismus zum Parlamentarismus in Schweden*, in: *Ständische Vertretungen in Europa im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert*, Göttingen 1969, pp. 368–397. See also S. Carlsson, J. Rosén, *op. cit.*, p. 104 and fol.; W. Konopczyński, *Geneza i ustanowienie Rady Nieustającej*, Kraków 1937, p. 37; M. Roberts, *Swedish and English Parliamentarism in the Eighteenth Century*, Belfast 1973, p. 20; E. Rostworowski, *Historia powszechna. Wiek XVIII*, Warszawa 1977, p. 395; C. Nordmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 6–7; Z. Anusik, *Czy na pewno pierwsza? Kilka uwag o konstytucjach szwedzkich XVIII wieku*, in: *Konstytucja Stanów Zjednoczonych Ameryki. Reminiscencje w 220. rocznicę uchwalenia*, J.A. Daszyńska (ed.), Łódź 2009, pp. 183–188; idem, *W cieniu...*, pp. 8–9. W. Konopczyński, who did not approve of the parliamentary government in Sweden, described the essence of the then changes in such words: "Acts of 1719, 1720 and 1723 had sequentially diminished the royal authority, brought cabinet governments of ministers to an end and unprecedentedly restored the omnipotence of the Parliament and seriousness of the Senate which was responsible to the nation. The "Age of Liberty" began, which was marked by a hypertrophy of the bureaucracy, fights between parties and the instability of parliamentary moods". See idem, *Polska a Szwecja. Od pokoju oliwskiego do upadku Rzeczypospolitej 1660–1795*, Warszawa 1924, p. 80.

years 1739–1742 who was considered one of the greatest teachers of that era, became the first tutor of the prince. He used his own educational methods while teaching Gustav. He was stimulating his imagination, giving books to read, teaching basics of techniques and drama forms. He could not, however, have a greater impact on his pupil as he fell out with Queen Louisa Ulrika and in 1754 had to resign from his post. After Tessin's resignation the little prince's education was mostly influenced by Olof von Dalin, the royal librarian and historian from the clerical estate associated with the "Caps". Under his influence Gustav became interested in history, which was to fascinate him for the rest of his life. The *Riksdag* of 1755–1756, in response to a failed coup d'état that had been undertaken under the auspices of the royal couple, further limited royal prerogatives and, directly interfering with the prince's education, issued quite reasonable (although maintained in a definitely anti-monarchic spirit) educational instruction that was being implemented between 1756 and 1762 by a new tutor of the heir to the throne, Baron Carl Fredrik Scheffer. Scheffer, an eminent diplomat and politician, a Swedish envoy to the court of Versailles in the years 1743–1752, proved to be an outstanding teacher and quickly gained confidence and affection of his pupil. The new tutor played a great role in shaping both, the intellect and views of the heir to the throne. Among subjects taught under Scheffer's tutelage there were Latin, Greek, French, history, mathematics, ethics as well as natural, customary and state law. It was mainly a humanistic model of education, although Scheffer's closest educational collaborator was a mathematician and physicist with an European reputation, Samuel Klingenskiöld. Although the young prince was not a very diligent student and did not attach too much importance to learning that did not interest him, he devoted a lot of time to studying history and learning the French language. That language was mastered over time, although congenital dyslexia caused him continual difficulty with spelling. Very early Gustav began to reveal a deep interest in literature, theatre and visual arts, which undoubtedly resulted from the subsequent awakening by his tutors the aesthetic inclinations he had inherited from his mother. As the successor to the throne (1751) Gustav was thoroughly prepared to rule the country. In addition to theoretical lessons he also had the possibility to observe actions of the army and fleet (despite having been refused military studies in the army of his uncle, Frederick II of Prussia, by the Swedish Parliament, the *Riksdag*, that considered it as a threat to the Swedish constitution). By participating in the meetings of the Senate (the State Council), the young prince gained firsthand experience regarding the functioning of the state administration as well. Initially, he was romantically involved with the party of the "Caps". Yet, during the *Riksdag* of 1760–1762, under the influence of Carl Fredrik Scheffer, he came over

to the party of the “Hats” gradually loosening his ties with the “Caps”. On April 5, 1762 the Swedish heir to the throne’s formal education was officially completed as the *kronprins* reached the age of sixteen years old⁴.

Mother and the tutors ensured that Gustav was brought up in the French spirit. He was interested in the literature and philosophy of the French Enlightenment and read avidly. He had a huge library which included latest releases. The Ambassador of Sweden to Paris, Gustav Philip Creutz, maintained regular correspondence with the prince on cultural issues and was sending him consecutive volumes of the Great French Encyclopaedia. It is also worth noting that absolutist beliefs of Gustav were mostly developed under the influence of French physiocrats (it was Carl Fredrik Scheffer who recommended their works to him) who believed that an “enlightened despotism” was the most appropriate form of governing. A book by Paul Pierre Mercier de la Rivière, “L’ordre actuel et essentiel des sociétés politiques”, had a great impact on shaping political views of Gustav. The lecture of “Henriade” by Voltaire and French classical tragedies significantly contributed to the formation of literary tastes of the young prince, too. His fascination with France and its culture meant that Gustav used the French language more easily than the Swedish one. Thus, in relation to his interest in the French culture and his love for France itself, he could be compared to his uncle, Frederick II of Prussia, as well as an elder cousin, Empress Catherine II (her mother, Joanna Elizabeth von Holstein-Gottorp, was a sister of Adolf Frederick, the Swedish successor to the throne’s father); however, Gustav’s love for France was, if not more honest, at least more stable. Following patterns of Versailles, reading the history of reign of Kings of France, Henry IV and Louis XIV, admiring Gustav Vasa, Charles XII and, above all, Gustav II Adolf, the Swedish *Kronprins* was consistently striving for a significant strengthening of the royal power in his country. His close political relations with France, however, came in the years of the *Riksdag* of 1765–1766 when the royal court definitively broke its connections with the party of the “Caps”⁵.

⁴ See B. Hennings, *Gustav III som kronprins*, Uppsala 1935, pp. 20–49, 50–98, 143 and fol., 159–184, 270 and fol., 308–349; eadem, *Gustav III. En biografi*, Stockholm 1957, pp. 12–38; eadem, *Gustav III*, pp. 458–459; G. v. Proschwitz, *op. cit.*, p. 15; B. Sallnäs, *Tessin Carl Gustaf*, in: *Svenska Män och Kvinnor. Biografisk Uppslagsbok* [further on: *SMoK*], vol. VII, Stockholm 1954, p. 491; O. Sylwan, *Dalin von Olof*, in: *SBL*, vol. IX, Stockholm 1931, pp. 50–65; H. Ehrencrona, *Scheffer Carl Fredrik*, in: *SMoK*, vol. VI, Stockholm 1949, p. 542; C. Nordmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 27–29; Z. Anusik, *Edukacja oświeconego księcia. Wychowanie i wykształcenie szwedzkiego następcy tronu, królewicza Gustawa (późniejszego Gustawa III)*, in: *Między barokiem a oświeceniem. Edukacja, wykształcenie, wiedza*, S. Achremczyk (ed.), Olsztyn 2005, pp. 260–279.

⁵ See B. Hennings, *Gustav III...*, p. 80; A. Geffroy, *Gustave III et la cour de France. Suivi d’une étude critique sur Marie-Antoinette et Louis XVI apocryphes*, vol. I, Paris 1867, pp. 74–101; R.N. Bain, *Gustavus III and his Contemporaries 1746–1792. An Overlooked Chapter of Eighteenth Century History*, vol. I, London 1894, pp. 13–27; 35–40, 216–220; H.A. Barton, *Gustav III*

The party of the “Caps”, which had taken the helm at the government in 1765, had to struggle with increasing difficulties from the very beginning. Both, financial policy, which was very burdensome for taxpayers and was not bringing any visible effects, and foreign policy chosen by the “Caps” were arousing public dissatisfaction. For immediate future, however, the most important fact was that court's plans of strengthening the royal authority had not encountered any counteraction on the part of the French diplomacy. This was so since the court of Versailles had greatly changed its policy on Sweden. France, opting for the immutability of the Swedish system and spending millions of *livres* on the party of the “Hats”, had finally realised the futility of its actions. The head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Etienne François, Duke of Choiseul, deeply concerned about an increasing influence of Russia and the “northern system”, decided to rebuild old French alliances in the East. “I am sorry to see, he wrote in his instruction for the French Ambassador to Constantinople, that the North of Europe became a slave of the Russian Empress... Denmark... despicably succumbs to her will. Sweden, due to unprecedented circumstances, deliberates and acts only at the Russians' command. The King of Prussia, spared, supports all actions of St. Petersburg. England is glad to see the consolidation of that northern alliance... I see with concern that a league is being prepared in the North which one day will become very dangerous for France... We should, therefore, strike on Russia”⁶. A restoration of Sweden's international importance by a restitution of a strong Swedish royal power in the country became one of roads leading to the empowerment of the Versailles court in the North. In that situation, Prince Gustav, dreaming of strengthening the position of the crown, could count on Louis XV's strong support. Furthermore, in April 1766 a decision was made at Versailles and passed to the French Ambassador to Stockholm, Louis Auguste Le Tonnelier, Baron of Breteuil, to strengthen the Swedish crown at the expense of both parliamentary parties. In March 1768 Prince Gustav, under the influence of the court of Versailles, initiated work on a new monarchical constitution. In May of the same year Adolf Frederick, pushed by his son, asked the French Minister of Foreign Affairs (Etienne François, Duke of Choiseul) in a personal letter to send to Stockholm a new diplomat

of Sweden and the Enlightenment, “Eighteenth Century Studies. An Interdisciplinary Journal”, vol. VI, No. 1, Berkeley (University of California) 1972–1973, pp. 1–5; G. v. Proschwitz, *op. cit.*, p. 9. See also N. Forssell, *Gustav III:s politiska debut. Bidrag till belysning av 1766–1769 års kris i Sveriges historia*, “Personhistorisk Tidskrift”, vol. XXI, 1920, [print: Stockholm 1921], pp. 111–131.

⁶ See An instruction of E. F., Duke of Choiseul for Ch., Count of Vergennes, Constantinople, April 21, 1766, L. Bonneville de Marsagny, *Le chevalier de Vergennes: son ambassade à Constantinople*, vol. II, Paris 1894, p. 304 and fol.; J. Feldman, *Na przełomie stosunków polsko-francuskich 1774–1787. Vergennes wobec Polski*, Kraków 1935, p. 20.

(the former Ambassador, the Baron of Breteuil, did not enjoy the confidence of the royal family) with every right to act in the monarchic spirit. The request of the King of Sweden was cordially received at Louis XV's court. Instructions for the new French Ambassador to Stockholm, François Charles de Raimond, Count of Modène, directly advised him to maintain the friendship of the King of Sweden. It was desirable from Versailles' point of view too, thus, instructions suggested to "unite all attributions of the supreme power in the person of the king over all branches of the government"⁷.

After his arrival to Stockholm the Count of Modène quickly became a confidant and a close collaborator of the successor to the Swedish throne. Everything seemed to favour the prince's plans. The "Caps" government was increasingly unpopular among people. A conflict between the "Caps" Senate and government colleges dominated by the "Hats" had been gradually increasing. On December 12, 1768 the heir to the throne read before the State Council (*Riksråd*) a statement containing a royal protest against a further reduction of the monarch's power. Prince Gustav also demanded, in the name of his father, the immediate convening of the *Riksdag*. In view of the refusal of the Council dominated by the "Caps", the king himself appeared in the Senate on December 15 threatening abdication and declaring that henceforth he would cease to perform his constitutional duties. At the same time, Prince Gustav, in agreement with the French diplomat, was preparing a violent overthrow of the constitution. Gustav's parents, who remembered the humiliation which they had suffered after the detection of an anti-constitutional conspiracy in 1756, were, however, staunch opponents of any violent measures. Adolf Frederick and Louisa Ulrika demanded only the convening of estates, hoping that together with the "Hats" they could make the party of "Caps" lose the election. The attitude of the royal couple forced the heir to the throne to cancel his significantly advanced preparations for the coup. However, as the demand made by the king for the immediate

⁷ W. Konopczyński, *Polska...*, p. 194. W. Kalinka confirmed that observation. He emphasised that the change in the French policy towards Sweden dated back from the time when the Duke of Choiseul noticed that "when buying different parties nothing happens and the royal power is only weakened to such an extent that it seems to be 'metaphysical'". Since then, recommendations to strengthen the royal power started to appear in instructions for French ambassadors to Stockholm. See idem, *Ostatnie lata panowania Stanisława Augusta*, vol. I, Kraków 1891, p. 54. Charles François, Count of Broglie, a head of the "secret" diplomacy, was giving similar advices to Louis XV as he wrote what follows: "It would be most beneficial for France if there was the monarchy in Sweden, if instead of wasting money and encouraging venality, money would be given to the king who would use it in the way appropriate to him". See *ibidem*, *loc. cit.* See also A. Geffroy, *op. cit.*, pp. 48–53; B. Hennings, *Gustav III...*, p. 45; I. de Madariaga, *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great*, New Haven–London 1981, p. 215; H.A. Barton, *op. cit.*, p. 4; Z. Anusik, *Między Rosją i Francją. Zarys dziejów wewnętrznych i polityki zagranicznej Szwecji w latach 1751–1772*, "Przegląd Nauk Historycznych" 2002, vol. I, No. 2, pp. 47–49.

convening of the *Riksdag* was supported by officials of the central government and troops stationed in the capital, the State Council was forced to make concessions. On December 20, 1768 it finally decided to announce the election of a new *Riksdag*. On December 21 Adolf Frederick proceeded to carry out his constitutional duties⁸.

THE PARTY OF THE "HATS" REGAINS ITS POWER

The French embassy promised a few million *livres* to the "Hats" for the election campaign provided that after the victory they would change the Swedish constitution in the monarchic spirit. The prospect that pro-French "Hats" would regain power in Sweden had seriously disturbed courts of St. Petersburg and Copenhagen. Nikita Panin, whose whole attention was then concentrated on an unfavourable to Russia situation in the Republic of Poland (the confederation of Bar) and developments at Black Sea (the war with Turkey), was urging the Danish government to invade Sweden. In February 1769 the Copenhagen ministry began to gather its troops. The Danish mobilisation, though, was stopped because of French and Spanish diplomatic intervention. Nevertheless, threats from Versailles and Madrid addressed at the Copenhagen court made Denmark cooperate closer with Russia. Representatives of both courts in Stockholm received orders to vigorously support an election campaign of the "Caps". Yet, elections to the *Riksdag* which were held on April 19, 1769 in Norrköping (the city was chosen as a meeting place of the Parliament following the advice of Ivan A. Ostermann who was taking into account the need of asking the Russian fleet from Kronstadt to intervene) ended with a decisive victory of the party of the "Hats". Fredrik Axel, Count von Fersen clearly defeated Baron Thure Gustaf Rudbeck in elections of the Speaker of the House of the Knights. Ten members of the State Council related to the party of the "Caps" were dismissed in May 1769. Politicians from the party of the "Hats" were nominated to those posts in their place. On May 29 Count Clas Ekeblad replaced Carl Gustaf Löwenhielm as the President of the Chancellery. The "Hats" were at the helm of the government once again⁹.

⁸ See R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, pp. 45–49; A. Geffroy, *op. cit.*, p. 107; I. de Madariaga, *op. cit.*, p. 215; J. Brown, *Les cours du Nord ou mémoires originaux sur les souverains de la Suède et le Danemarck depuis 1766*, vol. II, Paris 1820, p. 22; I. Andersson, *Dzieje Szwecji*, Warszawa 1967, p. 218; A. Kersten, *Historia Szwecji*, Wrocław 1973, p. 271; Z. Anusik, *Między Rosją...*, pp. 49–50; idem, *Partia "czapek" i początki liberalizmu w Szwecji*, in: *Liberalizm w Europie*, E. Wiśniewski (ed.), Łódź 2008, pp. 34–37.

⁹ See R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, pp. 49–50; I. de Madariaga, *op. cit.*, p. 216; H.A. Barton, *Scandinavia in the Revolutionary Era 1760–1815*, Minneapolis 1986, p. 64; A. Kersten, *op. cit.*, p. 271; L. Stavenow, *Geschichte...*, p. 405 and fol.; O. Jägerskiöld, *Ekeblad Clas*, in: *SBL*, vol. XII, Stockholm 1949, p. 630; Z. Anusik, *Między Rosją...*, p. 50. Russia spent 300 thousand roubles and

Shortly after the “Caps” government had been overthrown, on June 1, 1769, the *Riksdag* moved from provincial Norrköping to Stockholm. Prince Gustav and the Count of Modène began to insist on leaders of the “Hats” to fulfil their earlier promises and change the constitution in favour of the monarchy. A huge disappointment was awaiting the French ambassador, the heir to the throne as well as Adolf Frederick himself. The “Hats” gladly accepted the court’s help in the fight against the “Caps” but after the victory they did not fulfil their previous commitments. Fredrik Axel von Fersen and other leaders of the party had done nothing for the crown unless Carl Gustaf Pechlin (one of the then leaders of the “Hats”) with a group of his supporters joined the opposition and declared his accession to the “Caps”. Pechlin’s group caused a break in the party of the “Hats” and made it impossible to introduce any changes to the constitution. Moreover, the representatives of Russia, Denmark and England protested in Stockholm against attempts to strengthen the royal power in Sweden. Ostermann was doing everything to prevent the renewal of the Swedish-French alliance. The chances that the court of Versailles would sign an alliance with the government of the “Hats” had been slim from the beginning because France did not intend to make an alliance with Sweden until the royal power was strengthened there. In that situation, because of a stance position of Russia, Denmark and England that were opposing any political changes, the party of the “Hats” had not even tried to change the constitution. The French diplomacy had suffered another failure in Stockholm. Back in power, the noble party of the “Hats” led to the re-tightening of social antagonisms by reviving an old dispute between the nobility and three lower estates. Quarrels between the representatives of the nobility and three lower estates completely dominated last years of Adolf Frederick’s reign. On January 30, 1770 deputies were dismissed without having decided on any constructive resolution. The royal court had only pushed through a resolution on repaying debts of Adolf Frederick and Louisa Ulrika¹⁰.

Denmark 190 thousand *thalers* on an election campaign to the *Riksdag* of 1769. Although English diplomacy also contributed to it significantly, the “Caps” lost in the election. France paid 1,648 million *livres* to make the “Hats” a ruling party. See W. Kalinka, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

¹⁰ See C.G. Malmström, *op. cit.*, vol. VI, Stockholm 1901, pp. 98–187; L. Stavenow, *Frihetstiden*, pp. 419–429; S. Carlsson, J. Rosén, *op. cit.*, p. 186 and fol.; O. Jägerskiöld, *Den svenska utrikespolitikens historia*, vol. II, part 2 (1721–1792), Stockholm 1957, pp. 233–237; R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, pp. 50–51; I. de Madariaga, *op. cit.*, pp. 216–217; H.A. Barton, *Scandinavia...*, pp. 64–65; B. Hennings, *Gustav III som...*, pp. 350–373; eadem, *Gustav III...*, p. 50; A. Kersten, *op. cit.*, p. 272; Z. Anusik, *Między Rosją...*, pp. 50–51. E. Amburger estimated that during the *Riksdag* of 1769–1770 more over five million *thalers* came into the hands of Swedish politicians. According to the same author, the failure of projects on the constitution’s modification in the monarchic spirit should be considered as a painful defeat of France and a great success

Although during the *Riksdag* of 1769–1770 Ivan Ostermann managed to hinder projects of internal reforms and avoided strengthening of the position of the crown, the St. Petersburg court was anxiously observing developments in Sweden. At the end of 1769 Russia, which wanted to intimidate Swedish estates (a draft on changing the constitution of 1720 was finally abandoned in November 1769) and avoid unpleasant surprises in the future, signed alliances with Prussia and Denmark in which all three contractors had obliged themselves to counteract any attempts aimed to change the Swedish constitution. On October 23 a treaty with Prussia was signed. Under its provisions the Swedish attack on Russia or a restoration of the absolute power in Stockholm were to be regarded as *casus foederis*. If one of the above-mentioned was to happen, the army of Frederick II was to invade the Swedish Pomerania. At the same time Russian troops should invade Finland. On December 13 the Russian diplomacy, in turn, signed the same agreement with the Copenhagen court. One of the secret paragraphs of that treaty stated that any coup aimed at the Swedish constitution would be regarded as *casus foederis*, too. If attempts to restore a strong royal power were taken in Stockholm, the Danish army was to invade Sweden from Norway and Russian troops from Finland. Almost immediately after the conclusion of the treaty in question both courts began to mobilise their ground forces and fleet, preparing themselves for a military campaign that should start in the spring of 1770¹¹.

The St. Petersburg court was much relieved when the party of the “Hats” abandoned projects of internal reforms and started its conflict with the royal court. Russia, embroiled in the Polish confederation of Bar as well as a heavy war with Turkey, did not have to use force against its Scandinavian neighbour. Moreover, the possibility of an armed intervention in the internal affairs of Sweden became questionable as in September 1770 an omnipotent favourite of Christian VII, Johann Friedrich Struensee, made Johann Hartwig von Bernstorff resign from his post and Denmark withdrew from its pro-Russian policy. Yet, at that time, Catherine II did not intend to send her troops to Finland. In Sweden, a serious internal crisis was growing. People were increasingly discontent with the “Hats” government. The

of Russian, English and Danish diplomacy. See idem, *Russland und Schweden 1762–1772. Die Schwedische Verfassung und die Ruhe des Nordens*, Berlin 1934, p. 194 and fol.

¹¹ See F. de Martens, *Recueil des traités et conventions conclus par la Russie avec les puissances étrangères*, vol. VI, St. Petersburg 1882, pp. 11, 48 and fol.; *Danske Traktater 1751–1800*, vol. II, Kjøbenhavn 1876, p. 229; A. Geffroy, *op. cit.*, pp. 38–40, 42–43; I. de Madariaga, *op. cit.*, p. 218; H.A. Barton, *Scandinavia...*, p. 65; A. Kersten, *op. cit.*, p. 272; Z. Anusik, *Między Rosją...*, p. 52. A visit that Henry of Prussia paid to Stockholm at the beginning of 1770 was to prove that Prussia and Russia were deeply interested in a development of the internal situation in Sweden. See A. Sorel, *Kwestia wschodnia w XVIII wieku. Pierwszy podział Polski i traktat kainardżyjski*, J. Pajewski (ed.), Warszawa 1981, pp. 105–106.

admission of representatives of three lower estates to hold higher offices was commonly demanded. All that led to a widespread criticism of unfortunate decisions of the State Council on social and economic policy. Supporters of the court and the party of the "Caps" financed by the Russian court were against the "Hats". An opposition financed by the Russian embassy took the opportunity to attack the ruling party (Nikita Panin gave Ivan A. Ostermann a significant amount of money to support actions of politicians cooperating with the St. Petersburg court) and the "Caps" began preparations to regain power in the country. The party fight led Sweden to a state of a complete anarchy in late 1770 and early 1771. Needless to say, it was favourable to the interests of Russia which was worried about the Swedish revisionism and aimed to maintain an internal chaos in the country. The court of Catherine II was even planning to take Swedish strongholds in southern Finland in the near future¹².

THE BEGINNINGS OF GUSTAV III'S REIGN

In a tense atmosphere of rampant corruption and unproductive struggle with the government as well as representatives of the opposition, Adolf Frederick died suddenly on February 12, 1771. At that time, the successor to the throne, Prince Gustav, was travelling in Western Europe countries. The news of his father's death reached him on March 1 in Paris (he had been staying in the French capital *incognito*, as the Count of Gotland, from February 4, 1771). It was in Paris where the monarchist coup d'état in Sweden was being planned. Etienne François, Duke of Choiseul, had been trying to get the Swedish heir to the throne to implement it for a long time. Although Choiseul was dismissed by Louis XV at the end of December 1770, his plans on strengthening the position of the crown in Sweden were fully accepted and supported by the new head of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Louis Phélypeaux, Duke of La Vrillière. Before leaving the French capital Gustav III had been encouraged to violently overthrow the constitution and, more importantly, he had been given a promise of a payment of 10,5 million *livres* of unpaid subsidies as well as 1,5 million *livres* of additional annual subsidy. France even wanted to give Gustav a military support, proposing him to send its squadron to the Baltic Sea but in face of various possible diplomatic complications the king and his closest advisers (among Gustav's trustees and co-authors of his plans were then: Carl Fredrik Scheffer and the

¹² See C.G. Malmström, *op. cit.*, vol. VI, p. 188 and fol.; L. Stavenow, *Frihetstiden*, p. 430 and fol.; W. Kalinka, *op. cit.*, p. 55; A.S. Kan, *Carskaja diplomatija i borba partij v Svecii na ischode "ery svobod" (60-je i nacalo 70-ch godov XVIII v.)*, "Skandinavskij Sbornik", vol. VI, Tallin 1963; I. de Madariaga, *op. cit.*, p. 218; I. Andersson, *op. cit.*, pp. 215–216; E. Rostworowski, *op. cit.*, p. 690; Z. Anusik, *Między Rosją...*, p. 53.

Ambassador of Sweden to Paris, Gustav Philip Creutz, both accompanying him on a trip to Europe) recognised such a demonstration as undesirable. Since the new ruler's ascension to the throne required his formal election by the *Riksdag*, on March 15, 1771 Gustav III sent a written oath of allegiance to the constitution to the State Council. Three days later, on March 18, the young king left the capital of France where both, the court of Versailles and literary circles had taken a good view of him. On his way back to the country he visited Frederick II in Potsdam. The King of Prussia informed his nephew about an obligation to guarantee the Swedish constitution. He also announced that he was prepared to resort to the use of force if Gustav decided to overthrow the existing regime in Sweden¹³.

Frederick II's warnings had undoubtedly influenced Gustav III's undertaking steps in the first months after his return to Sweden (he returned to Stockholm on June 6, 1771). The king's position was quite difficult from the very beginning. During his absence the party of the "Caps", subsidised by Russia and England, had considerably strengthened its position in the country. In the spring of 1771 the election to the *Riksdag* was held and the Parliament confirmed Gustav III's election. The House of the Knights was dominated by the party of the "Hats". In other three chambers, however, the party of the "Caps" had gained an advantage thanks to the close cooperation with the Russian Ambassador to Stockholm, Ivan A. Ostermann. The ruler himself tried to play the role of a mediator in a conflict between two parties. It was his idea to create the so-called Conciliation Committee which was to make two factions compromise. The leaders of the "Caps", supported by Ostermann, did not want to make an agreement, though, and were torpedoing the Committee's meetings. Representatives of that party were *talmäns* in three lower chambers of the *Riksdag* and thus the "Caps" clearly wanted to

¹³ See C.T. Odhner, *Sveriges politiska historia under konung Gustaf III:s regering*, vol. I (1771–1778), Stockholm 1885, pp. 1–13; L. Stavenow, *Frihetstiden*, p. 439 and fol.; idem, *Geschichte...*, pp. 405–410; A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige och den franska revolutionen. Bidrag till kännedom om Sveriges och Frankrikes inbördes förhållande i slutet av 1700-talet*, vol. I (*Gustav III:s tid*), Stockholm 1920, pp. 36–37; B. Hennings, *Gustav III...*, p. 53; A. Geffroy, *op. cit.*, pp. 107–125; R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, pp. 53–60; W. Konopczyński, *Konfederacja barska*, vol. II, Warszawa 1938, pp. 47–48; A. Kersten, *op. cit.*, p. 272; J. Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 38; H. Leuss, *Gekrönte Sanguiniker. Historische Parallelen*, Berlin 1906, pp. 141–142; F. Arnheim, *Schweden*, Gotha 1917, p. 114; H.A. Barton, *Gustav III...*, pp. 6–10; I. de Madariaga, *op. cit.*, p. 218; Z. Anusik, *Między Rosją...*, pp. 54–55. More about a foreign trip of the heir to the throne between 1770 and 1771 see G.J. Ehrensvärd, *Dagboksanteckningar förda vid Gustaf III:s hof*, E.V. Montan (ed.), vol. II, Stockholm 1878, pp. 283–300. Let us add here that even in Paris Prince Gustav arranged the collaboration with a splinter group led by Fredric Carl Sinclair which was that part of the "Hats" that was supporting the monarchy. This was so since the new ruler had lost confidence in an official leader of the party, Fredrik Axel, Count von Fersen, who for a long time had been fighting against the idea of extending royal prerogatives. See B. Hennings, *Gustav III som...*, pp. 374–389.

overthrow the government. As to save the “Hats” Gustav III took (on account of the expected French subsidies) a significant loan in one of Dutch banks. Thanks to that money, given to the representatives of the nobility, the royal protégé, Baron Axel Gabriel Leijonhufvud, defeated Baron Thure Gustaf Rudbeck and became a Speaker of the House of the Knights. The unexpected failure made the “Caps” seek a compromise with the court. In a preliminary agreement made under the auspices of the king the seats in the Senate and the Secret Commission were distributed between the representatives of both parties. On June 25, 1771 Gustav III opened the meeting of the estates, calling for harmony and patriotism among members of the *Riksdag* that were gathered in Stockholm. He sincerely hoped that he could strengthen his own position without resorting to overthrow the existing political and legal order¹⁴.

From the outset, however, the king was deeply disappointed. The party of the “Caps” broke an agreement with the “Hats” which had been agreed upon under his own patronage and they took a majority of seats in the Secret Committee of the *Riksdag*. The estates could not agree in any way about the newly elected ruler’s commitments or the text of his coronation oath. If the coronation oath of Gustav III was the same as his father’s oath of 1751, it would confirm all current rights and privileges. Such a solution was not approved of by representatives of unprivileged estates. Soon, social conflicts began to tear apart both parties as well. The representatives of three lower estates began a massive attack on the system of an aristocratic privilege. In an atmosphere of quarrels, confusion and growing tensions between the House of the Knights and three other chambers, the *Riksdag* debate dragged on unproductively for several months. After long and complex debates the Commission composed of representatives of unprivileged estates had finally prepared a new form of royal obligations. It was extremely unfavourable to both, the monarchy and the nobility. The king was to lose the right to resign from the crown as abdication was considered illegal and contradictory to the current constitution. The nobility, in turn, was to lose its influence on a creation of a new law. A bill accepted by three estates would be adopted even if it had been rejected by the fourth chamber of the *Riksdag*. The House

¹⁴ See C.T. Odhner, *op. cit.*, pp. 25–29. Russia spent 337900 roubles and England 56 thousand pounds sterling on elections to the *Riksdag* of 1771–1772. At the same time, France spent 700 thousand *livres*. See *ibidem*, pp. 18, 23. See also R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, pp. 61–66; A. Geffroy, *op. cit.*, pp. 139–140; B. Hennings, *Gustav III...*, p. 55; H.A. Barton, *Scandinavia...*, p. 77; M. Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 26; D. Michellessi, *Rewolucja szwedzka sprawą Gustawa III dzisiejszego króla szwedzkiego w roku 1772 utworzona z przydatkiem formy nowego rządu y pism zaciągających się do tej odmiany, przez Xiędza... napisana a z francuzkiego na oyczysty (j)ęzyk przełożona*, Warszawa 1778, p. 23; J. Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 79; C. Nordmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 38–39; Z. Anusik, *Między Rosją...*, pp. 55–56.

of the Knights rejected a proposal of three lower estates on new king's commitments. The works of the *Riksdag* came to a standstill again. The fierce debate continued until February 24, 1772 without bringing any resolve concerning the struggle between the nobility and representatives of three lower estates. It was only due to pressure from the Russian diplomat, Ivan Ostermann, when members of the "Caps" who sat in the House of the Knights agreed to make some concessions and a slightly modified compromise could be pushed through that chamber. A compromise it might have been, but a text of new royal obligations was still favourable to three lower social classes. On March 4 Gustav III signed his commitments not even bothering to read them carefully. Soon after, the non-noble majority of the *Riksdag* voted the Senate's demission. That decision was confirmed on April 25 by the House of the Knights. Yet, lower estates did not make a full use of their victory. They lacked both, consent and cooperation as well as a clear, well-defined vision of the future¹⁵.

On May 29, 1772 Gustav III was solemnly crowned in Stockholm's *Storkirken*. It did not change his position at all and did not lead to an increase of the king's influence on meetings of the *Riksdag*. Meanwhile, the State Council had been dominated by representatives of the "Caps". After the death of Clas Ekeblad (he died on October 26, 1771) a post of *kanslipresident* was taken by a member of the party of the "Caps", Joachim, Baron von Düben. The "Caps" governed the country independently and began persecuting their opponents. All senators belonging to the party of the "Hats" had been removed from the Senate. Leaders of that party, without waiting for the end of the Parliament's meeting, left Stockholm. The defeated party of the "Hats" had definitely lost the support of France and was in a state of a total decay. Legal proceedings against officials associated with a defeated party were started in the province. The king tried to come to terms with the new government and follow the principles of the constitution but he was encountering stiff resistance at every turn. Decisions were taken against the will or wishes of the monarch both, in the *Riksdag* and the Secret Committee. At the beginning of August 1772 three lower estates decided that non-nobles had the right to hold all state offices, including the so far restricted for the nobility right to sit in the State Council. Peasants wanted their representatives to participate in works of the Secret Commission. To make matters worse, in the same

¹⁵ See C.T. Odhner, *op. cit.*, pp. 25–65; R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, pp. 65–80, 99–100; A. Geffroy, *op. cit.*, pp. 139–144; M. Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 7; H.A. Barton, *Scandinavia...*, pp. 78–80; idem, *Gustav III...*, p. 11; B. Hennings, *Gustav III...*, pp. 55–56; L. Trulsson, *Ulrik Scheffer som hattpolitiker. Studier i hattregimens politiska och diplomatiska historia*, Lund 1947; Y. Rosander, *Några brev från Gustav III och Charles de Vergennes till Fredrik Carl Sinclair under riksdagen 1771–1772*, "Historisk Tidskrift", vol. LXXIII, Stockholm 1953, pp. 417–436; Z. Anusik, *Między Rosją...*, pp. 56–57.

month, the ruling “Caps” came to terms with the Russian ambassador and began to prepare a draft treaty with the St. Petersburg court in which Russia was to guarantee all Swedish freedoms. Both, contemporaries and the posterity easily noticed similarities of the treaty prepared by Ivan Ostermann and his Swedish allies to the political guarantee which Catherine had imposed on the Republic of Poland a few years earlier¹⁶.

Obviously, Gustav III was not going to tolerate governments of the “Caps” and highly influential Russian Ambassador to Stockholm. When he realised the impossibility of reconciling interests of the nobility with aspirations of unprivileged classes, he decided to hold a coup d'état. First preparations to a violent overthrow of the existing regime had been started already in the summer of 1771 when a new French ambassador, Charles Gravier, Count of Vergennes, had arrived to Stockholm. Instructions that a successor to the Count of Modène had received on May 5, 1771 in Paris ordered him to work it out with the young king on the Swedish government regaining its dignity as well as respect and trust on the part of other powers. The ambassador was to closely cooperate with Gustav III and support his efforts to strengthen the position of the crown. He was advised to take advantage of a favourable international situation and carry out desired changes on the Swedish political scene at a time when Russia (embroiled in the Polish confederation of Bar and a heavy war with Turkey) would not be able to interfere in the internal affairs of Sweden. French subsidies for the Swedish crown were to be restored and strengthen the position of the king in the country as well. First impressions of a new ambassador fully confirmed the validity of decisions made at Versailles. Vergennes quickly became aware of a total degeneration of the Swedish political system and dangerously increasing social conflicts. In a message of July 25, 1771 he wrote what follows: “I see that all estates are driven by greed only, not understanding, affection or honour”. From the very beginning of his stay in Stockholm the new representative of France, following orders of his ministry, had been closely cooperating with the royal court and had been insisting on Gustav III's carrying out a coup designed in Paris as soon as possible. He had been raising necessary funds for that purpose, too. In 1771 Vergennes was authorised by his court to borrow two million *livres* from Holland. The following year, in turn, he received 200 thousand *livres* for ordinary expenses and 600 thousand *livres* to cover costs of the planned coup¹⁷.

¹⁶ See C.G. Malmström, *op. cit.*, vol. VI, pp. 210–343; L. Stavenow, *Frihetstiden*, pp. 439–454; R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, pp. 90–91; H.A. Barton, *Scandinavia...*, p. 80; A. Kersten, *op. cit.*, p. 273; B. Hennings, *Gustav III som...*, p. 365 and fol.; I. Andersson, *op. cit.*, p. 216, 219; D. Michellessi, *op. cit.*, pp. 41–42, 51, 160–165; W. Konopczyński, *Polska...*, p. 204; Z. Anusik, *Między Rosją...*, pp. 57–58.

¹⁷ See L. Bonneville de Marsagny, *Le comte de Vergennes: son ambassade en Suède 1771–1774*, Paris 1898; *Mémoire pour servir d'instruction au sieur comte de Vergennes allent en Suède pour*

THE MONARCHIST COUP D'ÉTAT AND THE END OF THE "AGE OF LIBERTY"

Preparations to the monarchist coup had been speeded up at the beginning of 1772. Then, Gustav III strengthened his cooperation with the French ambassador and both had been widening a circle of people interested in the coup. The young king found his allies among courtiers and officers of his own guard. Those around him gradually focused on a Swedish aristocracy who did not intend to allow themselves to be pushed by a government run by the representatives of the "Caps" who derived largely from plebeian classes. In the face of threats to its current position, the nobility was ready to look back at the king. Given the choice to protect their estate privileges or defend the current system of government, a significant part of the nobility chose the former option. A former teacher of Gustav, Count Carl Fredrik Scheffer, headed the royal party that was ready to support plans to strengthen the royal power. Vergennes also counted on the cooperation of a leading "Hats" activist (a brother of a leader of the royal party), Count Ulrik Scheffer. Yet, he was not sure about Fredrik Axel, Count von Fersen's attitude, although the latter was carefully probing the king's position as regards the possibility of a coup which could overcome the long growing crisis. Count Fersen's concerns, who privately expressed an opinion that a degeneration of the political system in Sweden led to the anarchy and the reign of the mob, were not unfounded at all. During the *Riksdag* of 1771–1772, in an atmosphere of fierce political struggles, constant quarrels and disputes between the nobility and unprivileged estates, an unspecified, great tension was growing. Sessions of the Parliament were undoubtedly influenced by crop failures and the threat of famine, two factors that made the Swedish countryside unrest. Developments in the international arena were being observed with tension, too. The Stockholm court was greatly agitated when in February 1772 the first partition treaty of Poland had been signed. Nevertheless, Gustav III's circles regarded Prussia and Russia's involvement in Polish affairs as circumstances favourable to conspirators' intentions. The news on an arrest (in January) and then execution (in April 1772) of the Danish dictator, Johann Friedrich Struensee, was well received in Stockholm as well. The Copenhagen inner crisis made the Danish intervention in Swedish affairs a distant perspective. In that situation, in the spring of 1772 Gustav III took up cautious efforts to win the Swedish public opinion over for his cause.

y résider en qualité d'ambassadeur du Roi, 5 mai 1771, in: Recueil des instructions donnés aux ambassadeurs et ministres de France depuis les traités de Westphalie jusqu'à la révolution française, vol. II (Suède), A. Geffroy (ed.), Paris 1887, pp. 432–442; A. Geffroy, op. cit., pp. 131–135; A. Söderhjelm, op. cit., pp. 37–39; H.A. Barton, Scandinavia..., p. 78; W. Kalinka, op. cit., p. 54; H. Leuss, op. cit., p. 143; J. Brown, op. cit., p. 40 and fol.; Z. Anusik, Między Rosją..., pp. 58–59.

The king wisely used all his strengths during the propaganda campaign. Gustav was especially favoured by the fact that since Charles XII he was the first prince of the ruling dynasty born in the country. Unlike his two predecessors, generally regarded as Germans sitting on the Swedish throne, he was a native Swede. Therefore, in his propaganda speeches Gustav III could refer to the reign of Gustavs and Charleses, the Vasas and Wittelsbachs as well as to the popularity of Gustav I, Gustav II Adolf and Charles XII¹⁸.

Among most active members of an anti-constitutional conspiracy there was a Finnish nobleman, Lieutenant Colonel Jakob Magnus Sprengtporten who gathered around him a group of royalist young officers and promised to win troops stationed in Finland over for conspirators' cause. Already at the beginning of May 1772 Sprengtporten presented the king (through Count Carl Fredrik Scheffer) with a specific plan of the coup. He predicted that the coup would start with a rebellion of Finnish troops stationed in Borgå (Porvoo). Then, the conspirators were to capture the fortress Sveaborg and invade entire Grand Duchy of Finland. It was further assumed that Finnish troops would be sent near Stockholm where (together with guardians faithful to the king) they would get control over the capital, arrest the members of the State Council and the Secret Commission as well as make the terrorised estates accept a new monarchical constitution. Soon after that a young man named Johan Christopher Toll arrived to Stockholm. He learnt about preparations for the coup pretty soon and decided to present the king with his own plan. According to Toll, steps against the government should be taken simultaneously in Stockholm and one of the southern provinces. Toll suggested the city of Kristianstadt on the east coast of Skåne. After long debates, the closest collaborators of Gustav III agreed that Toll's proposals would be taken into account in the final plan of the coup. Therefore, it was decided that the garrison stationed in Kristianstadt would revolt a few days after the rebel in Finland. The king's brother, Prince Charles, would be sent with his troops to the rebellious stronghold. There, he would turn against the government and attack Stockholm from the South while the Finnish troops would attack it from the East. Further on, everything was to be implemented according to Jakob Magnus Sprengtporten's plan. On May 31, 1772

¹⁸ See A. Geffroy, *op. cit.*, pp. 137–138, 150–154; C.T. Odhner, *op. cit.*, p. 89 and fol.; H.A. Barton, *Scandinavia...*, pp. 79, 81; Gustav III to Louisa Ulrika, Stockholm, February 11, 1772, in: *Gustav III:s och Lovisa Ulrika brevväxling* [further on: *Gustav III och Lovisa Ulrika*], H. Schück (ed.), vol. II, Stockholm 1919, p. 135; M.F. Metcalf, *Russia, England and Swedish Party Politics 1762–1766. The Interplay between Great Power Diplomacy and Domestic Politics during Sweden's Age of Liberty*, Stockholm 1977, p. 168; M. Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 39, 41; *Riksrådet och fältmarskalken m. m. Axel von Fersens historiska skrifter*, R.M. Klinckowström (ed.), vol. II, Stockholm 1868, p. 115; I. Andersson, *op. cit.*, pp. 218–219; D. Michellessi, *op. cit.*, p. 60; Z. Anusik, *Między Rosją...*, pp. 60–61.

conspirators took their first steps. On that day, Johan Christopher Toll went for a trip to Kristianstadt. On June 17, in a private letter, Gustav III informed Louis XV that he intended to carry out the coup and asked the French court for its support. Three days later he went to the spa in Loka where together with Carl Fredrik Scheffer he prepared a text of a new constitution. On July 8 the king returned to the capital where the Parliament was still deliberating. The government lost control over the situation and the *Riksdag's* meetings were increasingly scandalous. Meanwhile, Sir John Goodricke, an English envoy to Stockholm, found out about the conspiracy and immediately gave compromising for the king materials to the leaders of the "Caps". Yet, those documents were so vague that Gustav III could not be formally accused of anything. The government undertook necessary steps, though. Jakob Magnus Sprengtporten was officially recalled to Finland where his unit was stationed. Baron Thure Gustaf Rudbeck, Governor General of Stockholm, in turn, was sent on an inspection to the southern Sweden¹⁹.

As conspirators in Finland knew nothing about decisions made by the State Council, they started to implement their plan. On August 14, 1772 Jakob Magnus Sprengtporten revolted the garrison in Borgå, embarked his dragoons on ships and sailed with them to Sveaborg. He did not encounter any resistance in that fortress. Soon after, Sprengtporten's soldiers took control of Helsingborg (Helsinki). Over the next week, Jakob Magnus Sprengtporten ruled from Helsinki the entire Grand Duchy. On August 23 a leader of the coup in Finland embarked his troops and intended to sail with them to Stockholm. Yet, because of a sudden change in weather, storms and adverse winds, Sprengtporten's squadron could not leave the Helsinki port. Thus, the first part of the plan was not implemented. The Finnish troops did not show up in the capital in a chosen period. Almost at the same time when events in Finland were taking place, on August 12, 1772, Captain Abraham Hellichius, a commander of the city and fortress of Kristianstadt (acting in a close cooperation with Johan Christopher Toll), started a rebellion there. By coincidence Hellichius's rebellion was detected on the same day by the Governor General of Stockholm, Thure Gustaf Rudbeck, who arrived near the city walls at that time. Rudbeck was not let into the fortress and spent the night in a suburban tavern which he hurriedly left the very next morning heading to Stockholm. When a War Council of Prince Charles, who was well aware of the ruler's conspiracy, heard the news on the revolt of the Kristianstadt

¹⁹ See C.T. Odhner, *op. cit.*, p. 93 and fol.; A. Geffroy, *op. cit.*, pp. 156–158; R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, pp. 81–103; Gustav III to Louis XV, Stockholm, June 17, 1772, in: *Recueil de documens inédits concernant l'histoire de Suède sous le règne de Gustave III*, vol. I [*Correspondance inédite de ce souverain 1772–1780*], [L. Manderström] (ed.) [further on: *Recueil de documens* (Manderström)], Stockholm 1847, pp. 27–28; B. Hennings, *Gustav III...*, p. 57; eadem, *Gustav III*, pp. 458–460; Z. Anusik, *Między Rosją...*, pp. 61–63.

garrison, it decided that the king's brother, a commander of troops stationing in the southern Sweden, would leave Landskrona and march out towards the rebellious stronghold²⁰.

On August 16 Thure Gustaf Rudbeck returned to Stockholm. The State Council was immediately gathered. Under the influence of an English envoy even the king's arrest was taken into account but because of the lack of convincing evidence of Gustav III's participation in a conspiracy the thought was finally abandoned. When the Secret Commission received a message about Kristianstadt being blocked by government troops, it decided to strengthen the Stockholm garrison with the Uppland regiment and ordered Prince Charles to return immediately to the capital. The king was secretly informed that the leaders of the "Caps" intended to imprison him as soon as the Uppland regiment invaded Stockholm. In that situation Gustav III's attitude was to be decisive as regards the success of the coup. Yet, at the critical moment his advisers were not near him. The closest of them, Carl Fredrik Scheffer, waited for further developments in the countryside, ready to escape abroad if the entire project failed. The young king, however, stood up to the task. In the evening of August 18 he threw a lavish party in his castle. Then, he invited all guests to the theatre palace to listen to the Swedish opera "Peleus and Thetis" (he wrote the libretto himself). The same night he started preparations for the coup in the capital. He sent all important documents to the embassy of Spain, signed an order to arrest members of the State Council and then came out to accompany the bourgeois guard in its night patrol around the city. In the morning of August 19, 1772 he gave in the castle lodge a rousing speech to the officers of the guard who, together with two companies of soldiers, went over to the side of the conspirators. The Royal Guard started to occupy the arsenal, arrested members of the State Council and took control over all important buildings in the city. The Admiralty assured the king of its support and fidelity. Conspirators met with no resistance at all. The bloodless coup was joyfully welcomed by the residents of the capital. For two days (August 19 and 20) Gustav III, accompanied by a mounted unit of the Guard, was visiting different places around the city, giving speeches to the citizens of Stockholm and taking an oath of allegiance from the army and various magistracies²¹.

²⁰ See C.T. Odhner, *op. cit.*, pp. 114–127; R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, pp. 104–111; A. Geffroy, *op. cit.*, pp. 160–162; L. Stavenow, *Geschichte...*, pp. 426–427; H.A. Barton, *Scandinavia...*, p. 81; I. Andersson, *op. cit.*, p. 219; W. Konopczyński, *Polska...*, p. 204; T. Cieślak, *Historia Finlandii*, Wrocław 1983, p. 112; A. Kersten, *op. cit.*, pp. 274–275; G. Iverus, *Hertig Karl av Södermanland. Gustav III:s broder*, vol. I (*Till ryska kriget*), Uppsala 1925, pp. 56–80; D. Michellessi, *op. cit.*, pp. 75–76, 214–217; Z. Anusik, *Między Rosją...*, pp. 63–64.

²¹ See C.T. Odhner, *op. cit.*, pp. 127–154; R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, pp. 111–126; A. Geffroy, *op. cit.*, pp. 163–166; L. Stavenow, *Geschichte...*, pp. 427–433; B. Hennings, *Gustav III...*, pp. 58–65;

On August 21 the king summoned a plenary session of the *Riksdag* in the Stockholm castle. The estates' meeting place was surrounded by the army so that members could not show the slightest resistance. While speaking in the *Riksdag* the king gave a speech which was one of the finest classic orations in the Swedish history. He outlined the causes that made him violently overthrow the existing system. "It is a sad but a well-known truth that the state had been torn apart by hatred and discord... You know how that division had contributed to the anger, the anger to the revenge, the revenge to the persecution and the persecution to new revolutions which, finally, had turned into a chronic disease consuming and degrading entire society. Those revolutions had been tormenting the country because of ambitions of a few people, streams of blood had been shed by different parties while people had been, out of necessity, victims of those disagreements of which they had cared little but which consequences they had been suffering most. Thus, freedom, the most noble of human rights, had been changed into an aristocratic, unbearable despotism of the ruling party". Later in his speech Gustav III drew attention to dangers that were threatening Sweden on the part of its neighbours. "If internal affairs of the country are so endangered, how terrible are its foreign affairs... I hoped that my efforts to make peace between parties would free you out of those shackles which foreign gold and native hatred had put on you and that scary examples of other countries would be a dangerous warning to you, all in vain, though". The king expressed his future intentions with words: "You are very wrong if you suppose that I am looking here for something other than freedom and rights. I promised to lead free people; this promise is even more sacred for me as I made it myself. I am far from violating freedom and I just want to restrain parties' despotism and replace the lawlessness that had been ruling the kingdom with a wise and just government like the one that had been provided by Sweden's ancient laws and had worked in the days of my famous ancestors". Gustav III's pathetic and sentimental oration was well received by many listeners. Terrorised estates not only made an oath of allegiance to the king but even sent a deputation to him with thanks for extracting the kingdom from the anarchy. In that atmosphere the members of the *Riksdag* accepted the collapse of the existing system of government and on the same day, August 21, 1772, passed the proposal for a new constitution presented

eadem. *Gustav III*, p. 460; G.J. Adlerbeth, *Historiska anteckningar. Efter en i von Brinkmanska Archivet på Trolle-Ljungby befintlig handskrift*, G. Andersson (ed.), part 1, Örebro 1856, p. 1 and fol.; K. Tønnesson, *Les Exemples Scandinaves: La Suède*, in: *L'absolutisme éclairé. Colloques de Matrafüred*, ed. B. Köpeczi, Budapest–Paris 1985, p. 312; H. Leuss, *op. cit.*, pp. 144–148; H.A. Barton, *Scandinavia...*, p. 81; A. Kersten, *op. cit.*, pp. 274–276; W. Konopczyński, *Polska...*, p. 204; I. Andersson, *op. cit.*, p. 220; D. Michellessi, *op. cit.*, pp. 62–91; J. Brown, *op. cit.*, pp. 35 and fol., 79–215; Z. Anusik, *Między Rosją...*, pp. 64–65.

to them by the king. Two days later Gustav III wrote about the incident to his mother: "I had an absolute power in my hands by a voluntary submission of each of estates but I thought it nobler, more generous as well as more appropriate to what I had said before and certainly better for my future government if I limited the scope of the royal power leaving people their fundamental rights and freedoms and retained for myself only what would be necessary to prevent abuses". After totally submissive estates had fulfilled all Gustav III's demands (the king was most anxious to establish his tax proposals), he dissolved the *Riksdag* on September 9, 1772, making a solemn promise to re-convene it within the next six years²².

The bloodless coup d'état of August 19, 1772 brought to an end the "Age of Liberty" in Sweden which had endured there for over 50 years (1720–1772). That period played such a great role in the history of that country that we have to devote to it a few sentences of a further comment. The opinion on the "Age of Liberty" in the Swedish historiography oscillates between extremely critical judgments on the one hand and opinions directed at the total rehabilitation of the image of a political life in that era on the other. Formerly, the historiography generally accepted unreservedly the monarchist propaganda of Gustav III. The Age of Political Parties was condemned as a dark period in the history of Sweden. It was exposed as a time of corruption, anarchy and interference of foreign powers in the internal affairs of the country. According to many prominent Swedish historians, Gustav III, by holding a coup d'état, saved Sweden from succumbing to the fate of Poland and losing independence because of Russian and

²² See C.T. Odhner, *op. cit.*, p. 155; R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, pp. 127–131, 136–138; A. Geffroy, *op. cit.*, pp. 166–167; H.A. Barton, *Scandinavia...*, pp. 82–83; I. Andersson, *op. cit.*, pp. 220–221; G. Olsson, "Epoka wolności" w Szwecji (1718–1772). Przegląd problematyki badawczej, "Zapiski Historyczne" 1970, vol. XXXV, p. 49, 63; M. Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 41. Gustav III's full speech to the estates dated August 21, 1772 see *Konung Gustaf III:s skrifter in politiska och vittra ämnen tillika med dess brevexling*, vol. I, Stockholm 1806, p. 88; *Collection des écrits politiques, littéraires et dramatiques de Gustave III, roi de Suède, suivie de son correspondance*, J.B. de Chaux (ed.), vol. I, Stockholm 1803, pp. 103–107. See also Gustav III to Louisa Ulrika, August 23, 1772 Stockholm, in: *Gustav III och Lovisa Ulrika*, vol. II, p. 255. Most important works on the coup of August 19, 1772 (literature quoted above excluded) include: C.F. Sheridan, *A History of the Late Revolution in Sweden*, London 1788; E.G. Geijer, *Konung Gustaf III:s efterlämnade och femtio år efter hans död oppnade papper*, Uppsala 1843; C.G. Malmström, *op. cit.*, vol. VI, pp. 344–411; C. Nordmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 45–60 (Chapter III: *Le coup d'état de 1772*); Z. Anusik, *Gustav III's coup d'état of 19 August 1772. The end of the "Age of Liberty" in Sweden*, "Sarmatia Europaea. Polish Review of Early Modern History", vol. II, 2011/2012, pp. 47–64; idem, *Monarchistyczny zamach stanu Gustawa III z 19 sierpnia 1772 r. Geneza, przebieg, konsekwencje*, "Przegląd Nauk Historycznych" 2013, vol. XII, No. 1, pp. 91–121. For a detailed review on source materials and literature describing the August coup see H. Schück, *Gustaf III:s statsvälvning 1772 i berättande källor och äldre litteratur*, Historiskt Arkiv 4, Uppsala 1955. See also L. Stavenow, *Frihetstiden*, pp. 454–465; S. Carlsson, J. Rosén, *op. cit.*, pp. 194–198.

Danish partitions²³. An attempt to rehabilitate the "Age of Liberty" had been made by the representatives of the liberal and democratic mainstream of the Swedish historiography. In their opinion, in 1772 there was no real threat to the independence of Sweden posed by Russia, Prussia or Denmark. A system of international relations decided of the success of the coup d'état of August 19. Proponents of a positive evaluation of the "Age of Liberty", when condemning the coup d'état carried out by Gustav III, were also exhibiting in their works gradually progressive blurring of distinctions among classes, introduction of the freedom of press, proclamation of a limited tolerance for Calvinism or governing the responsibility given to the society. They also stressed out an undeniable fact that at that time Sweden was experiencing a period of an economic prosperity and from the thirties of the eighteenth century it had opened to the ideas of the Enlightenment²⁴. Recognising all

²³ C. G. Malmström, whose work is an essential and most comprehensive study of the then political history of Sweden, gave a sharp judgment about the "Age of Liberty". L. Stavenow, a student of Malmström, shared views of his master. See C.G. Malmström, *op. cit.*, vol. I–VI, *passim*; L. Stavenow, *Frihetstiden*, pp. 465–474; A. Kersten, *op. cit.*, p. 275; G. Olsson, *op. cit.*, pp. 49–50. Among Polish historiographers W. Konopczyński is definitely reluctant to a political system of the "Age of Liberty". It should be noted that he mainly criticised all excesses of the system which consequently led to the degradation of the importance of Sweden in the international arena. It was through the prism of international relations that Konopczyński assessed Gustav III's coup d'état which had undoubtedly contributed to the strengthening of the state and had confirmed sovereignty of Sweden in relations with its powerful neighbours. "The main shortcomings of "liberal reigns"... [according to Konopczyński – author's note]... were weakness of the royal power, heaviness of many-headed Senate or State Council, the latter's excessive dependence on the Parliament or its "secret departments" and deputations, unbalanced position of the king and the assembly of estates, confusing mixture of administrative and legislative factors resulting from the fact that every few years parliament officials were turning into demagogues and agitators who dictated law to their superiors and finally, excessive unbundling of authority between the legislature and executive which prevented members of the Senate from participating in parliamentary sessions and made main party leaders abstain from participating in the government and rule the country behind the scenes. Further on, partisanship in public life, the break between estates, voters and electors' vulnerability to demoralisation, foreign influences, bureaucratic pedantry in administration, grouching and lawlessness, licentiousness and arrogance". See *idem*, *Geneza...*, p. 357.

²⁴ That trend was initiated in the Swedish historiography by F. Lagerroth in 1915. Representatives of a younger generation of Swedish historians also had a positive opinion of the "Age of Liberty". See mainly F. Lagerroth, *Frihetstidens författning...*, *passim*; *idem*, *Frihetstidens maktägande...*, part 1 and 2, *passim*; G. Olsson, *op. cit.*, *passim*; *idem*, *Hattar och mössor. Studier över partiväsendet i Sverige 1751–1762*, "Studia Historica Gothoburgensia" No. 1, Göteborg 1963. A balanced and objective assessment of that period in the history of Sweden was presented also by M. Roberts. See *idem*, *The Age of Liberty 1719–1772. Sweden 1719–1772*, Cambridge 1986. Among Polish historiographers A. Kersten was a prime and thorough supporter of the rehabilitation of the "Age of Liberty". See *idem*, *op. cit.*, p. 275. As regards cultural and scientific achievements of Sweden in the Age of Political Parties see mainly A. Geffroy, *op. cit.*, pp. 54–74; F. Arnheim, *op. cit.*, pp. 106–110; I. Andersson, *op. cit.*, pp. 212–214.

positive developments that had occurred in the history of Sweden, in the present era it should be noted that the fierce rivalry between fighting political factions led to serious distortions of the system and, in fact, resulted in the disintegration of Swedish state institutions²⁵. There is also no doubt that during that time Sweden's role in international politics decreased. We must look at that era as objectively as possible and reject any extreme views; both, positive and negative effects of a party government in Sweden must be considered. We have to state that the period in question was a very important experiment in the history of that state and nation²⁶. However, regardless of any subsequent evaluations of the "Age of Liberty", one fact remains indisputable – a vast majority of the Swedish population did not regret the overthrown political system.

FORMAL AND LEGAL BASIS OF GUSTAV III'S REIGN AFTER THE AUGUST COUP

The monarchist August coup of 1772 started a new era in the history of Sweden. The new constitution (form of government) imposed by Gustav III and approved of by the *Riksdag* on August 21 had completely transformed a political system of the kingdom. Parties of the "Hats" and the "Caps" disappeared from the political scene. Political parties were to withdraw from all activities. Yet, the young king had not introduced a full autocracy. He decided it would be better to share power with people. This was so since he dreamt of renewing political institutions from times of Gustav II Adolf²⁷. Therefore, the August constitution (very vague and full of internal contradictions) was a compromise between a concept of the enlightened absolutism and old Swedish parliamentary traditions. It reflected an enlightened idea of natural rights of men. It was also influenced by legal and political views of Mercier de la Rivière and Montesquieu. Gustav's form of government restored the balance between the throne and freedom. The king, responsible to God and posterity, once again became a source of honour and justice, a commander of fortresses, *sole medium* in foreign relations, a head of the executive within the country, in other words the supreme organ of the

²⁵ See I. Carlsson, *Parti-partiväsen-partipolitiker 1731–1743. Kring uppkomsten av våra första politiska partier*, "Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis", Stockholm Studies in History 29, Stockholm 1981, p. 305.

²⁶ H. Valentin made a wide review of the historical literature devoted to the judgments of the "Age of Liberty". See idem, *Frihetstiden inför eftervärlden. Med kompletterande efterskrift av Birger Sallnäs*, 2nd ed., Stockholm 1964. With regard to the need to make an objective assessment of the Age of Political Parties see also S. Carlsson, J. Rosén, *op. cit.*, pp. 198–202; I. Andersson, *op. cit.*, pp. 210–212.

²⁷ See H.A. Barton, *Gustav III...*, pp. 11–12.

executive power. For the time being he could make or cancel international treaties and had state revenues at his disposal. He had a monopoly of coin and could appoint and dismiss all ministers and officials as he wished. However, civil and military nominations (courtly ones excluded) were to depend on "the ability and qualifications, not the birth, unless they were accompanied by other attributes as well". It was a clear concession to unprivileged estates that resulted in a definitive break of the nobility's monopoly on the highest state offices. The State Council (the Senate) was not a form of government as it was to play a consultative function only. The responsibility of senators to the *Riksdag* was abolished as well. The Council was to be responsible to the king who had an exclusive right to decide on its members. However, he was obliged to consult with the Council all matters of justice and legislative proposals, war or peace, any alliances as well as his own foreign trips. In special cases, his will could be questioned by an unanimous opinion of senators. However, the constitution did not specify a maximum number of the State Council's members and the king could appoint new senators at any moment. Thus, the monarch's need to comply with an unanimous opinion of the Senate was purely theoretical. If opinions of senators were to be divided, the ruler could choose an opinion that pleased him most. Gustav III nominated a number of lawyers as members of the Council because, according to the new form of government, it had rights similar to those of the Supreme Tribunal Court. Therefore, on September 8, 1772 the king issued a decree on the Senate's meetings. It divided the State Council into two sections. The first one (consisting of eight members) was to deal with the matters of justice. The second one (consisting of nine members) was to decide on military and financial problems as well as foreign policy. Although the constitution stated that nominations for all important state offices were to be made during the Senate's meetings, the State Council had no impact on the choice of the ministerial posts. This was so since the constitution gave the king an unquestioned right to appoint all government officials according to his wish.

The Swedish regime imposed by Gustav III assumed harmonious cooperation of the executive and legislative power. The latter one was, in fact, divided between estates and the king. The August constitution introduced a number of changes in the organisation and competences of the *Riksdag*. Their main objective was to reduce the estates' role and strengthen the ruler's impact on all four chambers. The king had an exclusive right to convene and resolve the Parliament. The *Riksdag's* role was diminished by the fact that the monarch could decide on convening the estates without being bounded to any statutory terms. What is more, the ruler regained the right to appoint the Speaker of the House of the Knights and the Chairman of the House of the Bourgeois and the House of the Clergy. The Secret Committee

of the *Riksdag* as well as all deputations that had determined the Swedish Parliament's form in the "Age of Liberty" were abolished. According to the provisions of the new form of the government, there were only two committees to operate in the *Riksdag*: the state and the banking one, both consisting of the representatives of three higher estates. The reformed *Riksdag* retained the right of legislative initiative (sharing it with the king) as well as the sovereignty over the *Riksbank* (the National Bank) and some old powers regarding tax policy (it adopted taxes for a specific period and the king was obliged to submit to it reports on the state's spending). The representatives of estates could submit to the king complaints as regards administrative matters and economic policy of the state. No new as well as old rights and privileges could be constituted, nor abolished without the *Riksdag's* consent. The king could issue administrative regulations in internal matters but there was no strict boundary between the royal regulation and law. The consent of the Diet was also necessary to start an offensive war. The monarch could not change the constitution without the *Riksdag's* consent and he could choose preceptors for his children only after having consulted it with the estates. The king had only a suspending *veto* in the *Riksdag* which forced him to seek the chambers' support for legislative proposals presented to them²⁸.

Gustav III, for whom the enlightened absolute monarchy was an ideal political system, believed that a political balance was based on a hierarchical social system. Therefore, he was convinced that a close alliance between the nobility and the crown was an essential element of Sweden's political and social stability. The king's knightly tastes and historical romanticism pushed him towards the nobility. It should be also reminded that his coup was fully supported by the aristocracy as it depended on the noble officer corps. Almost immediately the king rewarded his followers with numerous nominations. In September 1772 he granted 40 ennoblements for services rendered to the

²⁸ A full text of the constitution of August 21, 1772 (57 paragraphs) in Polish see D. Michellssi, *op. cit.*, pp. 102–159. The same text in English see W. Coxe, *Travels into Poland, Russia, Sweden and Denmark*, vol. IV, London 1787, pp. 429–447. Comments on the whole August constitution as well as its paragraphs see C.T. Odhner, *op. cit.*, pp. 155–157; L. Stavenow, *Den gustavianska tiden 1772–1789, Sveriges politiska historia till våra dagar*, E. Hildebrand, L. Stavenow (eds), vol. X, Stockholm 1925, pp. 12–17. H.A. Barton, *Scandinavia...*, pp. 82–83; R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, pp. 131–132; K. Tønnesson, *op. cit.*, p. 311, 313; E. Rostworowski, *op. cit.*, p. 690, 751; W. Konopczyński, *Polska...*, p. 204; A. Kersten, *op. cit.*, pp. 277–278; I. Andersson, *op. cit.*, p. 223; Z. Anusik, *Czy na pewno...*, pp. 198–200; idem, *Od liberała do despoty. Ewolucja postawy Gustawa III w latach 1771–1792* in: *Władza i polityka w czasach nowożytnych*, Z. Anusik (ed.), Łódź 2011, pp. 162–164. For more information on the *Riksdag's* functioning see G. Landberg, *Den svenska riksdagen under den gustavianska tiden*, in: *Sveriges riksdag. Historisk och statsvetenskapling framställning*, vol. VII, Stockholm 1932, pp. 24–41. A detailed description of the State Council see F. Almén, *Gustav III och hans rådgivare 1772–1789. Arbetssätt och meningsbrytningar i rådkammare och konseljer*, Uppsala 1940.

monarchy during the August coup. Aristocratic officers of Finnish regiments were promoted to higher ranks and no aristocratic – ennobled. Captain Abraham Hellichius, a commander of the rebellious stronghold Kristianstadt, was promoted to the rank of the colonel and received a diploma of the nobility (with a new name – Gustafskjöld). The royal brothers were given new titles: Charles, Duke of Södermanland and Frederick, Duke of Östergötland. The most meritorious leader of the Finnish rebellion, Jakob Magnus Sprengtporten, was appointed the Commander of the Order of the Sword, the General-Lieutenant and the Colonel of the Royal Guard. Among the most active participants of the coup only Johan Christopher Toll was not initially rewarded at all. However, later on he received a knighthood and the right to sit in the House of the Knights. Needless to say, Gustav's court was full of elegance and gallantry as the ruler was known for his vast ambitions, romantic fantasy and love for the theatre – he was writing his own historical dramas and was corresponding with d'Alembert, Diderot or Voltaire. The French language and spirit was dominant at the court of the young ruler whose fascinating personality made it one of the finest cultural mansions of the *ancien régime*. The Stockholm court's ceremonial was closely modelled on that of Versailles, the fact which stemmed not from the fascination of Louis XV's court but the intention to imitate French political solutions. From the very beginning of his reign, Gustav III, courting and favouring representatives of the nobility, was determined to transform Swedish aristocracy into a courtly nobility that would depend on him and serve as some kind of the monarchy's praetorian guard. Gustav was also systematically ennobling potential leaders of a growing opposition of unprivileged estates. This was so since the new constitution gave the king the right to ennoble those who had supported the state and the crown. It was paradoxical, though, that the aristocracy and the nobility comprised most republican and conservative political force in Sweden, which was to be the greatest obstacle to the future political plans of the "theatrical king-knight-philosopher"²⁹.

INTERNAL REFORMS IN THE SPIRIT OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT

For the time being, however, the position of the ruler, who had abolished the party anarchy, was so strong that he could start a thorough reform of political and socio-economic structures of his country. It should be emphasised that although Gustav III was a follower of the "Hats" party as regards foreign policy, in internal matters he continued actions initiated by the party

²⁹ See H.A. Barton, *Scandinavia...*, pp. 99–100; A. Geffroy, *op. cit.*, pp. 338–339; R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, pp. 138, 213–215; A. Kersten, *op. cit.*, p. 278; E. Birck, *Sprengtporten Jakob Magnus*, in: *SMoK*, vol. VII, Stockholm 1954, pp. 155–156; S.G. Svenson, *Toll Johan Christopher*, in: *ibidem*, vol. VIII, Stockholm 1955, pp. 2–3; E. Rostworowski, *op. cit.*, p. 751.

of the “Caps”. After the August coup the king, undoubtedly influenced by the latter party’s programme, tried to fight out administrative abuses. Thus, in the following years he was consistent in his efforts to significantly liberalise the economy and launched a large monetary reform. The reforms of public finances and country’s economy were indeed the most urgent tasks of the new government. An empty treasury and a significant debt were inherited after the “Age of Liberty”. Moreover, bad harvest that had repeated several times after 1771 entailed hunger, poverty and mass begging. Gustav III entrusted the task of healing country’s economy with his chief adviser on economic issues, the Secretary of State (*statssekreterare*) in *Handel och finansexpeditionen*, Johan Liljencrantz, an actual (since 1773) head of the Department of Trade and Finance. Although both, the young ruler and his minister took a lot of ideas from the programme of the “Caps” party, they were mostly influenced by an economic thought of French physiocrats. As the physiocrats attached great importance to an agricultural development and promoted freedom of economic activities, such as the principle of free trade, Liljencrantz made vigorous efforts to modify the existing state policy in that regard. Peasants’ position significantly improved after his agricultural initiatives. A tax system was unified and a tax collection modified in such a way that it charged more from large landowners than peasants. Cotters were given the right to acquire land. Restrictions on hiring wage-earners were abolished, too. The government was consistently supporting progress and technical innovations in agriculture and it took up steps to speed up the distribution of municipal lands and the consolidation of peasant lots. In 1774 (because of the abundance of grain on the market) a regulation abolishing duties on grain exported from the country was issued. The very next year the free trade in grain was announced in Finland, the decision which was to prepare the ground for the extension of that proclamation on the whole country. The king supported Liljencrantz’s reforms as he established the Order of Vasa which was awarded for outstanding achievements in the field of agriculture, mining, craft, trade and arts. It should be noted that a prominent French economist and a promoter of the physiocratism, Victor Riqueti, Marquis of Mirabeau, was one of the first foreigners who received that order.

Still, not all actions of the government were popular among peasants. A decision (from 1773) to suspend selling crown lands to peasants was badly received in the countryside. A ban on a purchase of state taxes introduced in the same year was a serious blow for them as well. However, it was an attempt to introduce a state monopoly on distillers that caused greatest unrest and a huge public dissatisfaction. Although the initiator of the reform, Liljencrantz, claimed he was willing to stop the drunkenness which was a real plague in the eighteenth century Swedish countryside, he wanted,

in fact, to make money on that operation as he counted that the treasury would earn more from the monopoly than it had been previously receiving from an excise tax on alcoholic beverages. In the autumn of 1774 a royal decree banned private distillation of alcohol and in 1775 a distillery management was created that set up a number of major alcohol manufactories, some of which were later leased out. Yet, it did not stop the illicit production of moonshine and in different parts of the country there were violent riots against the monopoly. Thus, costly and ineffective reform was withdrawn and the monopoly was replaced by treasury's licenses on operating a distillery.

Liljencrantz started a reform of the foreign trade with a similar energy and determination. In 1774 he forced through his old project to grant Marstrand on the west coast of Sweden rights of a free port. It contributed to both, a rapid development of the city and a significant improvement of the Swedish foreign trade. What is more, customs tariff fixed in 1776 lowered tariffs on many goods and abolished numerous bans on import. Neither Liljencrantz nor his royal patron decided to go much further, though. Therefore, the entire economic policy of Gustav III used to be called a "reformed mercantilism". A liberalisation of the foreign trade was not accompanied by any significant changes in other sectors of the economy. All sorts of privileges and monopolies were still in power, although to the smaller extent, and a rigorous state protectionism was applied to a domestic industry, trade and shipping. Nevertheless, during first years of Gustav III's reign all sectors of the Swedish economy had clearly increased their production³⁰.

The main concern of Liljencrantz was, however, not a reform of the economy, but an increase of government revenues. The financial situation of Sweden was, in fact, very difficult and reforms undertaken by the government proved to be very expensive. In 1774 a budget deficit amounted to approximately 682 thousand *riksdalers* while a national debt totalled to nearly 9,6 million *riksdalers* (about 80 million *livres*). In 1776 a public debt reached a staggering sum of more than 104 *tunnor guld* (104 million *livres*). In order to increase tax revenues Liljencrantz decided to abolish some religious holidays (to increase the production and speed up the recovery of the

³⁰ See C.T. Odhner, *op. cit.*, pp. 345 and fol., 348 and fol., 352–381; H.A. Barton, *Scandinavia...*, pp. 101–102, 105; idem, *Gustav III...*, p. 16; R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, pp. 171–172; A. Kersten, *op. cit.*, pp. 278–279; I. Andersson, *op. cit.*, p. 224; E. Rostworowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 623, 751–752; G. Majewska, *Polityka handlowa Szwecji w latach 1720–1809*, Wrocław 1991, pp. 40–43, 99–102; Å. W. Essén, *Johan Liljencrantz som handelspolitiker. Studier i Sveriges yttre handelspolitik 1773–1786*, Lund 1928; *Den svenska historien*, vol. VII, Stockholm 1968, p. 193; E. Olán, *Marstrands historia*, Göteborg 1923; A. Geffroy, *op. cit.*, pp. 313, 315, 320–322; E.F. Heckscher, *Sveriges ekonomiska historia från Gustav Vasa*, vol. II (1720–1815), Stockholm 1949; idem, *An Economic History of Sweden*, Cambridge [Mass.] 1954; Z. Anusik, *Od liberała...*, pp. 164–165.

economy), established a state lottery and allowed to create discount banks for individuals. On his initiative the Bureau of the Public Debt was created. Yet, Liljencrantz's greatest achievement was a bold monetary reform which aimed to increase Swedish exchange rate and restore, suspended in 1745, the exchange of *Riksbank's* notes. Liljencrantz's monetary reform, prepared without the Bank of Sweden's directors' consent and harshly criticised by experts, came into force on January 1, 1777. On that day a new *riksdaler*, based on the silver specie standard, was put into circulation and the treasury exchanged paper notes for new silver *riksdalers* paying half of the nominal value of former banknotes. At the same time, banknotes fully convertible to representative money were issued. Two large government loans incurred in Amsterdam as well as the reform carried out in favourable economic conditions prevented the crisis and largely contributed to the reform's success³¹.

Almost immediately after the August coup Gustav III began a fight with the bureaucracy that was completely independent from the central government. Attempts to curb the lawlessness and abuse of local authorities were already made at the end of the "Age of Liberty". The then ruling party of the "Caps" started numerous investigations and took many dishonest judges and government officials to court. Initially, it was thought that the coup of August 19, 1772 would put an end to anti-bureaucratic actions initiated by the "Caps". Yet, Gustav III had no confidence in local magistracies of the previous regime and soon started a campaign directed against too powerful and too independent officials. He wanted the entire state apparatus being strictly supervised by the central government. In December 1772 the Minister of Justice, *justitiekansler* Joachim Wilhelm Liljenstråle, was sent on inspection to the South of Sweden. The king encouraged him to make a thorough inspection there. During his stay in southern provinces Liljenstråle detected a huge fraud and found out many irregularities in the bookkeeping. Thus, after a very thorough and detailed inspection, he initiated administrative investigations against many governors, heads of municipalities, tax collectors, judges and members of town councils. Officials were clearly reminded that they should serve the public, not themselves. In a short time, thanks to Liljenstråle's extensive investigations directed against representatives of the provincial bureaucracy, numerous accusations against corrupt and incompetent officials were made. Many persons were to pay fines or change their posts and some of the most discredited officials were even forced to hand in their resignation. In the autumn of 1773, in turn, Gustav III ordered

³¹ Aims and realisation of Liljencrantz's monetary reform see C.T. Odhner, *op. cit.*, pp. 430 and fol., 436–454; L. Stavenow, *Den gustavianska...*, pp. 35–45. See also H.A. Barton, *Scandinavia...*, pp. 103, 111; B. Hennings, *Gustav III...*, pp. 78–79; R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, pp. 165, 166–169, 170; A. Kersten, *op. cit.*, p. 279; C. Nordmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 84–86; Z. Anusik, *Od liberała...*, p. 166.

to carry out inspections in the infamous Court of Appeal (*Göta hovrätt*) in Jönköping. Irregularities discovered during that inspection led in November 1774 to a public trial of 16 judges, councillors and assessors. The process that had been carried out by the State Council (*Justitierevision*) lasted until April 1777. Only two of the accused judges were dismissed and the others were temporarily suspended in their activities, got reprimanded or had to pay fines. Light sentences in that difficult but prestigious for Gustav III case expressed a reluctant position of most members of the Council towards the government policy on the civil corps. Despite the failure, Gustav III achieved his goals. He led to the reorganisation of the *Göta hovrätt* in Jönköping and contributed to its improvement. He reminded everyone of his superior position in the field of justice. Finally, he stopped the most blatant abuses and made a powerful and independent administrative corps being controlled by the central government. In 1774 a general overview of the entire bureaucratic apparatus was started as well. Many redundant positions and salaries were reduced then. At that time, plans to improve conditions of the government service were also prepared. In 1775, in turn, Gustav III paid a visit to Finland. The number of Finnish provinces (*län*) was increased from four to six and a Court of Appeal for the southern Finland was established in Vaasa. In 1778 a reformed salary system for state officials was introduced, which allowed them to retire at the age of 70³².

From the beginning of his reign Gustav III was dreaming of rebuilding the former power and authority of Sweden. One of the most important goals of his policy was also to play a great role in the international arena. The young king, however, was well aware of the fact that to lead an active foreign policy he would need a strong army and fleet. Thus, he decided to start large-scale armaments. Yet, it was an extremely difficult task. Both, an army and navy were in a very bad state after the "Age of Liberty". A military education in Sweden was also extremely low. For those reasons one of the most important tasks of the new government was to improve the latter one as well as quickly start necessary military reforms. A royal decree of March 21, 1774 established the National Defence Commission. Count Carl Sparre was its important member who prompted urgent changes in both, the army and the fleet. Sparre, appointed in 1773 the *översteståthållare* of Stockholm, was the main military adviser of Gustav III who initially controlled everything that was associated with armed forces of the country. In 1776 Johan Christopher Toll was made his adjutant-general and an actual deputy. He was gradually

³² See K. Awebro, *Gustaf III:s räfst med ämbetsmännen 1772–1779 – aktionerna mot landshövdingarna och Göta hovrätt*, "Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis", Studia Historica Upsaliensia 96, Uppsala 1977; H.A. Barton, *Scandinavia...*, pp. 101, 111–112; idem, *Gustav III...*, p. 16; Z. Anusik, *Od liberała...*, p. 166.

taking over most responsibilities of his superior. Thanks to the energetic Governor of Stockholm and his talented adjutant-general fleet of the line was quickly modernised, new fortifications in Finland constructed, coastal fleet (*skärgårdsflottan*) reorganised and powerful bastions of Sveaborg extended. In order to facilitate the command of the fleet, the headquarters of the Admiralty was moved from Karlskrona to Stockholm. Thus, in the late seventies the Swedish armed forces looked much better than at the beginning of Gustav III's reign³³.

Although Gustav III, like other enlightened monarchs, did not codify the law, he modernised the judicial system. He abolished tortures, witch-hunts and extraordinary courts. He limited a number of offenses punished with a maximum sentence and made it more difficult to sentence people to death. He took an extremely progressive step and significantly improved legal status of bastards and their mothers. The king also cared for Stockholm and strongly supported interests of its citizens. He found in Carl Sparre a dedicated contractor of plans to modernise that most important Swedish metropolis. The latter's governance in Stockholm was widely considered one of the best periods in the history of the Swedish capital. Gustav's love for theatre and court was, in turn, reflected in a reform of the national costume that was modelled on Peter the Great's reforms carried out in Russia in the early eighteenth century. Officially, it was said that the national costume for the nobility and the bourgeoisie had been introduced in Sweden in order to increase national production and limit the import of textiles. In fact, it was to satisfy ambitions and aesthetic tastes of the ruler. Gustav III had probably all reasons to be satisfied. In a special royal ordinance it was described in details that on April 28, 1778 the entire Swedish court had been dressed in new costumes for the first time³⁴.

³³ A detailed discussion on military reforms between 1774 and 1777 see C.T. Odhner, *op. cit.*, pp. 459–471. As regards navy reforms see *ibidem*, pp. 476–478. For more information on Carl Sparre's actions as the Minister of War see *ibidem*, p. 398 and fol. See also L. Stavenow, *Den gustavianska...*, pp. 45–48; B. Hennings, *Gustav III...*, pp. 87–89; R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, pp. 176–177; O. Nikula, *Svenska skärgårdsflottan 1756–1791*, Helsingfors 1933; K. Kumlien, *Sparre Carl*, in: *SMoK*, vol. VII, pp. 141–142; S.G. Svenson, *op. cit.*, pp. 2–3.

³⁴ See E. Anners, *Humanitet och rationalism. Studier i upplysningstidens strafflagsreformer – särskilt med hänsyn till Gustaf III:s reformlagstiftning*, Lund 1965; E. Rostworowski, *op. cit.*, p. 753; A. Kersten, *op. cit.*, p. 280; S. Salmonowicz, *Prawo karne oświeconego absolutyzmu. Z dziejów kodyfikacji karnych przełomu XVIII/XIX w.*, "Roczniki Towarzystwa Naukowego w Toruniu", vol. LXXI, 1966, issue 2, p. 255; C.T. Odhner, *op. cit.*, pp. 509–517. As regards Carl Sparre's governs in Stockholm see *ibidem*, p. 418 and fol.; E. Kumlien, *op. cit.*, pp. 141–142. For more information on the national costume's reform see A. Geffroy, *op. cit.*, pp. 316–317; H.A. Barton, *Scandinavia...*, pp. 111–112; idem, *Gustav III...*, p. 16; E. Bergman, *Nationella dräkten. En studie kring Gustaf III:s dräktreform 1778*, Stockholm 1938.

Although the king was quite moderate in his reforms, some of his decisions met with the public discontent. As Gustav III was very sensitive about any criticism of his actions, in April 1774 he issued an ordinance that restricted freedom of the press. Publications on the meetings of the State Council and the *Riksdag* as well as press releases on relations with foreign countries were banned. Any attacks aimed at the government were to be regarded as a betrayal and crime against the majesty of the king. It was allowed to describe actions of individual officials only. A strict censorship of books, pamphlets and newspapers was introduced, too. Restrictions on opposition prints were being gradually stepped up. All those actions made Gustav unpopular among French philosophers. Enlightened foreign countries with large reserve adopted the king's decision to establish (in years 1774–1776) a secret police that was to be based on the French model. Although Gustav III created that force in order to be reliably informed about everything that was happening in his country, there was always the danger that it would be used to fight the opposition and suppress the criticism so disliked by the king³⁵.

CHANGES IN THE ORGANISATION OF THE SWEDISH DIPLOMATIC SERVICE

From Gustav III's point of view the most important right of the monarch was the ability to conduct foreign policy. Although in internal affairs he agreed to make the most important decisions together with the members of the State Council, from the very beginning he had foreign affairs in his own hands. The August constitution had hugely limited powers of the Chancellor College (*Kanslikollegium*) in the area of foreign policy and diplomacy. The College had no longer the right to propose candidates for diplomatic posts and listen to the reports of diplomats returning to the country from their missions. Gustav III reserved for himself the sovereignty over the entire diplomatic service. The way in which correspondence with Swedish diplomats at foreign courts was held was also significantly changed. On September 1, 1772 a member of the Chancellor College, Baron Melkior Falkenberg, the senator, wrote to the Swedish envoy to France, Count Gustav Philip Creutz: "I have to tell you on this occasion that ministerial affairs are being conducted differently than before. His Majesty personally opens all letters from the ministers. These letters are no longer passed to neither the Senate nor the Chancellor College but after decryption they are shown only to His

³⁵ See S. Boberg, *Gustaf III och tryckfriheten*, Göteborg 1951, pp. 39, 60–61; H.A. Barton, *Scandinavia...*, pp. 104–105; idem, *Gustav III...*, pp. 15, 17; B. Hennings, *Gustav III...*, p. 84; N. Staf, *Polisväsendet i Stockholm 1776–1850*, Uppsala 1950, pp. 47–55; Z. Anusik, *Od liberała...*, p. 167.

Majesty and their content is known only to His Majesty, the President of the Chancellery and me. The same applies to all letters sent from here to our ministers”³⁶.

The day after the announcement of the new constitution, on August 22, 1772, Gustav III made major personnel changes in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. On that day the former President of the Chancellery, Joachim von Düben, was replaced by a close collaborator of the king, Count Ulrik Scheffer. In a circular letter of September 8, 1772 Ulrik Scheffer informed Swedish envoys accredited to foreign courts about his taking the post of the *kanslipresident*. The letter clearly showed that Gustav III overtook the management of the foreign policy from the *Riksdag*. The new President of the Chancellery emphasised it once again in his circular letter of September 11, 1772. On that occasion, the *kanslipresident* informed Swedish diplomats about new rules in carrying out diplomatic correspondence. From that time on, all secret reports were to be addressed directly to Gustav III. The President of the Chancellery was to receive reports of more general nature or those that regarded current work and the functioning of the diplomatic mission. The circular letter of September 11, 1772 defined the way Swedish foreign affairs were to be managed in the so-called “Gustavian age”. Thus, the monarch became *de facto* his own Minister of Foreign Affairs. Although the President of the Chancellery was a formal leader of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs he had lost, in fact, all the influence on foreign policy. The Chancellor College had significantly changed as well. On July 1, 1773 Gustav III issued an ordinance which regulated in detail the organisation and functioning of that state authority. A collective nature of the College was maintained. From that time the Chancellor College was to consist of the President of the Chancellery, one of the senators (*rikskansliråd*), the Chancellor of the Court and four Secretaries of State. Yet, the Chancellor College depended on the monarch’s initiative in all matters related to the state’s foreign policy. At the same time, the ordinance of July 1 had widely limited appointment rights of the *Kanslikollegium*. Since then, it was only entitled (sometimes in consultation with the College of Commerce) to present candidates for secretaries of embassies, diplomatic agents and consuls as well as to write instructions for those officials. Ambassadors, envoys and ministers plenipotentiary were to be appointed by Gustav III³⁷.

³⁶ As cited in A. Forssell, *Histoire de l'administration des affaires étrangères 1721–1809*, in: *Histoire de l'Administration des Affaires Étrangères de Suède*, Upsal 1940, p. 292. See also R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, pp. 193–195.

³⁷ See L. Trulsson, *Scheffer Ulrik*, in: *SMoK*, vol. VI, Stockholm 1949, pp. 542–543; A. Forssell, *op. cit.*, pp. 293–295.

Separate regulations of the ordinance of July 1, 1773 pertained to the functioning of the Presidential Office (office of the President of the Chancellery). Paragraph 25 of the ordinance in question stated that the king, with the help of the Presidential Office's staff, would correspond with all ambassadors, ministers and Swedish envoys accredited to foreign courts. His orders, instructions and regulations could be passed to them by the king or the President of the Chancellery. On the one hand, the Presidential Office was to fulfil the monarch's need to correspond with Swedish diplomatic missions abroad. On the other hand, it was to assist the President of the Chancellery if he was entrusted with preparing diplomatic documents on behalf of the ruler. Still, if the king did not want to entrust the President of the Chancellery with the content of his diplomatic correspondence, he always had the right to give the Presidential Secretary (*presidentsekreterare*) more independent post. The officer in question was, in fact, to keep an eye on all steps taken up by the Presidential Office. It was him who was responsible for the encryption of outgoing letters and the declassification of the entire diplomatic correspondence addressed to the king and the President of the Chancellery. In the near future the Presidential Office was to sort out and classify documents in two groups, those that were submitted to the President of the Chancellery and those to which he had no access. The Chancellor of the Court who was a member of the Chancellor College (in 1773 it was Baron Fredrik Sparre) still acted as an intermediary between royal closest advisers and the Chancellery. He was to speak on behalf of the king at the Council's meetings when important state matters were discussed. The Chancellor of the Court was also responsible for writing minutes of the Senate's meetings on foreign policy. He was to participate in the king's audiences with ambassadors, ministers and residents of foreign countries as well. If the king wished, the Chancellor of the Court responded to foreign diplomats on the king's behalf. Yet, competences of the Chancellor of the Court were very imprecise which gave the king the possibility to freely interpret his rights. If the ruler considered it beneficial for his policy, he could oppose the Chancellor of the Court to the President of the Chancellery³⁸.

The form of the government of 1772, the Senate's rules of procedure, Ulrik Scheffer's circular on diplomatic correspondence, rules for the Chancellery and regulation on the organisation of the Presidential Office were to legally specify the functioning of foreign affaires' central administration until the end of Gustav III's reign. Yet, already in the first years of the new regime, the king had gradually abandoned certain ideas developed by him or under his right of legislative initiative. It was most evident in the ruler's relations with

³⁸ See A. Forssell, *op. cit.*, pp. 295–297. See also K. Kumlien, *Sparre Fredrik*, in: *SMoK*, vol. VII, p. 142; *Sparre Fredrik* in: *Biographiskt Lexikon öfver Namnkunnige Svenska Män*, vol. XV, Uppsala 1848, p. 145.

the State Council. Initially, the Senate's meetings on foreign affairs were held in accordance with the principles of the law. The king participated in the Council plenary debates or meetings of one of its departments and made appropriate decisions. Yet, later on there were meetings of the Senate which the king did not participate in. At such meetings statements of the senators were written down and sent to the king who, in turn, wrote his decision on the margin and gave it a form of an order by writing on the bottom "*expedieras*" ("send") together with the destination of the consignment, date and signature. That kind of royal resolutions, issued between the Senate's meetings, were called "*listes*". The king started to use that way of making decisions on foreign affairs more and more frequently. It was natural if one took into account numerous trips of the monarch. In that way the king was able to efficiently conduct all matters concerning the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from any place in Sweden or abroad. Plenary meetings of the senators as well as their meetings in the Senates' departments were still being continued but they lost much of their former importance. In most cases those meetings were treated as the working ones of which preliminary results were presented to the king who was to approve of them and make final decision on his own³⁹.

Although the rights of the Chancellor College had been largely limited, in the first months after the August coup it was the President of the Chancellery who maintained the entire foreign correspondence. The situation changed, however, when in the spring of 1773 Ulrik Scheffer became ill and was unable to perform his duties. Then, Gustav III decided to personally take over correspondence with Swedish diplomats accredited to foreign courts. The king himself chaired the Presidential Office and personally edited a large number of important letters and messages addressed to Swedish diplomatic missions. Yet, the documents were signed by Ulrik Scheffer who was still present in Stockholm. When in the summer of 1773 the President of the Chancellery decided to restore his health and left the capital for his countryside estate, Swedish diplomats were informed that during his absence they would be receiving orders directly from the king. Thus, Gustav III replaced Scheffer in all his responsibilities. The king was supported in fulfilling the tasks of an absent *kanslipresident* by the senator and member of the Chancellor College, Melkior Falkenberg, and the Chancellor of the Court, Fredrik Sparre, who were holding weekly conferences with foreign diplomats accredited to Stockholm. That state of affairs lasted for years until Scheffer's resignation in 1783. For all that time Gustav III maintained direct correspondence with Swedish diplomats at foreign courts. Initially, the king consulted his decisions with Scheffer but very quickly he began to conduct foreign policy without informing the President of the Chancellery about a current state

³⁹ See A. Forssell, *op. cit.*, pp. 299–301.

of affairs. It caused many tensions in the relations between the monarch and the formal head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs⁴⁰.

A close cooperation between Gustav III and the Presidential Office contributed to a significant growth in the importance of the latter's leader. The role of the Presidential Secretary, the king's closest associate in maintaining correspondence with Swedish embassies abroad, was becoming increasingly important year by year. That was the main reason why Jakob von Engeström, the Presidential Secretary appointed to that post in the "Age of Liberty", was replaced in 1776 by a more dedicated to Gustav III Ulric Gustaf Franc. The latter fact started a long-lasting conflict between Franc and his formal superior, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Carl Albrekt Rosenadler, whose importance was largely diminished. At the end of 1776 Gustav III was to face the problem of reorganising central authorities of the state administration. It was attributed to, then, Johan Liljencrantz's reform of the monetary system. The introduction of new currency created the need to redefine an amount of salary for all government officials. The latter fact served an excuse to significantly reduce number of people working in various government agencies. On March 20, 1777, during a discussion on a partial reorganisation of the Chancellery, Carl Albrekt Rosenadler, who had been the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and from 1766 had been *de facto* a chair of the *Kanslikollegium*, resigned from his post. Gustav III did not fill the vacancy and entrusted the management of ongoing works of the Chancellor College with the Secretary of Expedition, Carl Fredrik Fredenheim. The latter one started a vigorous struggle with the idea of a drastic reduction in the Chancellery's personnel. The zeal and enthusiasm of Fredenheim affected further development of events. Thanks to his efforts, the state budget adopted on January 24, 1778 provided a compensation for not only high-ranking state dignitaries: the President of the Chancellery, the senator – a member of the Chancellor College, and the Chancellor of the Court, but also two counsellors of the *Kanslikollegium* and six junior officials. Fredenheim's Foreign Expedition Office received money for five employees (including the Secretary of the Expedition) and the Presidential Office, chaired by Ulric Gustaf Franc, received salaries for eight officials (including the Presidential Secretary). In total, Stockholm foreign service was to hire twenty-four employees. Such a staff was sufficient to maintain correspondence with diplomatic posts abroad. The staff, however, (with a possible exception of Ulrik Scheffer) had almost no influence on a direction of foreign policy. This was so since all decisions in that regard were made at secret meetings of the king and his closest associates⁴¹.

⁴⁰ See *ibidem*, pp. 301–302.

⁴¹ See *ibidem*, pp. 302–306; O. Jägerskiöld, *Den svenska...*, pp. 248–249. See also L. Krusius-Ahrenberg, *Engeström Jakob von*, in: *SBL*, vol. XIII, Stockholm 1950, pp. 615–626. Engeström

A FOREIGN POLICY OF GUSTAV III AFTER THE AUGUST COUP

The first task of the new government's foreign policy was to repel an expected aggression from the neighbours. The coup d'état in Stockholm dissatisfied St. Petersburg, outraged Copenhagen and dismayed Berlin. The joint action of all three courts could pose a huge threat to Sweden's sovereignty. Therefore, Gustav III, supported by Count Ulrik Scheffer, started an active diplomatic campaign to reverse the imminent danger. Almost immediately after having overthrown previous regime he turned to Louis XV and asked him for a *bona officia* and military support if he was attacked by one of his neighbours. Because the young king feared most for Pomerania, which had always been a titbit of the King of Prussia, before the August coup he had appointed his mother the Governess of that province. He was also eagerly corresponding with his uncles, Frederick II and Henry, Prince of Prussia, as to dissuade the Berlin court from interfering with the internal affairs of his country. Yet, the future of Sweden depended to a large extent on the attitude of the court of Versailles. Fortunately for Gustav III, from the beginning the French cabinet was determined to defend the new order in Sweden. Paris had enthusiastically received the news on the Stockholm coup. There was nothing strange about it because authoritative leaders of French society, namely philosophers, parliaments and the king's retinue, perceived Gustav III as an ideal king-philosopher and the reformer of the North. It was reflected in the message of the Swedish envoy to the French capital, Count Gustav Philip Creutz, who on September 7, 1772 wrote to the king that almost every day he was receiving 200 letters of congratulations from various parts of the country⁴².

French diplomacy, fully supported by the public opinion, almost immediately undertook steps to help Sweden. On September 18, 1772 the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Emmanuel Armand de Vignerot du Plessis de Richelieu, Duke of Aiguillon, sent congratulations to Stockholm on a successful coup and assured the King of Sweden that France would do everything to prevent foreign intervention in the internal affairs of his country. French envoys to St. Petersburg, London and Copenhagen had been ordered to issue an official declaration of the court of Versailles and warn the most interested countries that France would support the Swedes if any attempt

was the Presidential Secretary from May 26, 1766. On February 7, 1776 he was nominated the Chancellery Councillor (*kansliråd*). For more information on U.G. Franc see N.F. Holm, *Franc Ulric Gustaf*, in: *SBL*, vol. XVI, Stockholm 1964–1966, pp. 411–412.

⁴² See A. Geffroy, *op. cit.*, pp. 169–183; R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, pp. 135–136; A. Söderhjelm, *op. cit.*, p. 40. For more information about the then Sweden's position in the international arena see A.J. Hjelt, *Sveriges ställning till utlandet närmast efter 1772 års statshwälfning*, Helsingfors 1887; C. Nordmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 61–77 (Chapter IV: *Le nouveau regime et l'Europe 1772–1774*).

of foreign intervention in their country was to be made. Louis XV himself wrote in a similar vein to Gustav III a couple of weeks later (on October 13)⁴³. The French Ambassador to Stockholm, Charles Gravier, Count of Vergennes, the co-organiser of the August coup, also tried to convince his court of the need to provide Sweden with all possible help. In his message dated September 30, 1772 he wrote what follows: "I find it unprecedented that powers should make transactions for an account of a third party without any former notification and not having been asked to do so. Russia and Prussia have no right to interfere in the internal affairs of Sweden; therefore, their alleged secret guarantee is nothing more but an attack on the constitution's rights of which guardians and guarantors they believe to be... One should not appeal to the sense of justice of two powers which had abandoned its most common rules. Their own business is a public law for them; on its behalf, after having torn Poland apart, they will also want to invade Sweden and share between them its most beautiful provinces, if they do not encounter firm opposition"⁴⁴.

In October 1772, with an undisputed participation of the French ambassador, a draft of the future Swedish-French alliance was prepared in Stockholm. It reflected the views and wishes of both, Gustav III and Charles de Vergennes. The document stated, in fact, that both sides were deeply satisfied with the change in the form of the government in Sweden. The August revolution would certainly calm the political situation in Europe as it would eliminate the constant rivalry between great powers for influences in Stockholm. Moreover, would-to-be allies expressed the belief that all free and independent nations had the right to regulate their internal affairs according to their liking and wish. The proposed alliance was to be purely defensive and it was not formally directed against any other country. Both kings were to make a mutual guarantee for all possessions. They were also to declare that they would fight for the maintenance of peace and would do everything to prevent the outbreak of the war. However, if Sweden was attacked because of political changes introduced after the August coup, France was to deliver 12 thousand infantrymen, 12 ships of the line and six frigates to support military operations of its ally. Half of those forces were to be sent by Sweden if foreign troops invaded France. Infantry was to set off within six weeks and the fleet within three months after a request for military assistance had been issued from the assaulted state. The project also provided the possibility of paying cash equivalents instead of sending military reinforcements.

⁴³ See E. A., Duke of Aiguillon to Gustav III, Versailles, September 18, 1772 and Louis XV to Gustav III, Fontainebleau, October 13, 1772, in: *Recueil de documens* (Manderström), pp. 18–19, 25–26.

⁴⁴ A. Geffroy, *op. cit.*, p. 183; J. Feldman, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

If additional support was needed, both parties were to agree on that problem in a separate agreement. It was expected that the treaty would stay in force for three years, starting from January 1, 1773. Although the treaty mentioned the possibility of other European courts' participation in the agreement, it was to be kept secret until the situation after Gustav III's coup was clarified. Under a separate, secret declaration the Swedes were also to authorise Louis XV to use the French squadron against Russia not in the Baltic but the Mediterranean Sea⁴⁵.

Yet, the Stockholm draft alliance with France was not approved of by the court of Versailles and it had to remain an unrealised dream of the Swedish king. Meanwhile, Gustav III had a legitimate cause for concern. He was especially preoccupied with an attitude of the Copenhagen court which clearly intended to undertake the military intervention in defence of the old system of the government abolished in Sweden in August. When the Danes heard of a monarchical coup in Stockholm they started to equip their fleet in Øresund and put their military units in Norway on alert. The strengthening of the royal power of the representative of a hostile to Denmark Holstein-Gottorp dynasty was a serious threat for the Copenhagen court. Thus, Gustav III decided to make an armed demonstration against the Danes. On November 7, 1772 he left the capital to inspect the army. On November 9 he sent (prepared in advance in Stockholm) a letter to Louis XV with a request to stop hostilities of the Scandinavian neighbour aimed at his kingdom. He also warned the court of Versailles that if the Danes did not stop their actions directed at Sweden, he would be forced to start war with them. In the same letter he informed the King of France that the Swedish Ambassador to Copenhagen, Johan Vilhelm Sprengtporten, was ordered to make a formal declaration of his court with a demand to stop Danish armaments⁴⁶. When in Christianshavn, Gustav III received a peaceful answer of the Copenhagen court. Therefore, a demonstration against Denmark brought effect so desired by the king's advisers. Yet, Gustav III decided to continue reinforcements. He believed that only a strong army and fleet could protect him from an attack of both, Denmark (he still did not believe in peaceful intentions of the Copenhagen court) and, above all, Russia. Besides, he had another, carefully hidden from the public opinion, goal to achieve. Gustav III was unsatisfied with a peaceful course of the August coup. He was deeply interested in the possibility of starting a new war and making another conquests. He was

⁴⁵ See *Projet d'un traité d'alliance deffensive entre le Roi Très Chretien et le Roi de Suède*, (8bre 1772), Riksarkivet in Stockholm [further on: RA], Gallica vol. 555, no page numbering (this remark applies to all files of Riksarkivet).

⁴⁶ See Gustav III to Louis XV, Stockholm, November 9, 1772, in: *Recueil de documens* (Manderström), pp. 29–30. See also R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, pp. 149–151.

especially concentrated on Norway. Already in August 1772, shortly before the coup d'état, he wrote a brief memorial entitled "Reflections" in which he pondered over the possibility of invading that country. He was thinking about starting a peasant uprising there which he could militarily support. He would be perceived as Norway's liberator from the Danish oppression, and thus, gain a widespread "esteem both, at home and abroad"⁴⁷. Yet, intensive Swedish reinforcements met with the St. Petersburg court's disapproval. As the latter one was waging war in the southern Europe from 1768, it feared that France might persuade Sweden to attack Russia in order to relieve Turkey. Although those fears were totally unfounded, Catherine II decided to deploy part of her troops near the Finnish border⁴⁸.

Gustav III, himself rather ambiguous and insincere in his actions, proved to have great intuition and good knowledge of things in not believing the Copenhagen court's peaceful intentions. Denmark backed down only because of Russia. Catherine II, embroiled in a serious war with Turkey, wanted to settle a score with Sweden in the spring of 1773. Moreover, the St. Petersburg court expected that by the spring it would have managed to arrange some kind of anti-Swedish coalition with England and Prussia. Thus, Russia, putting aside the military intervention, took up steps to create such a coalition. In September 1772 Nikita I. Panin offered the English envoy to St. Petersburg, Robert Gunning, to make an anti-Swedish alliance. The Russian initiative, however, was coldly welcomed by London cabinet which did not intend to break its strict neutrality. Also Frederick II was quite unwilling to cooperate against Sweden. Meanwhile, on February 27, 1773 Gustav Philip Creutz and Emmanuel Armand, Duke of Aiguillon, signed in Paris the secret Franco-Swedish subsidy treaty. The alliance was made for three years and envisaged the payment of French subsidies to the Swedish treasury in the amount of 800 thousand *livres* a year, not counting the overdue subsidies that France was also to pay to the Stockholm court. St. Petersburg quickly received exaggerated news on the treaty of Paris which was not a formal alliance treaty and differed significantly from the draft prepared last October in Stockholm. The capital of Russia feared that it would lead to the signing of an alliance treaty between Sweden and the Porte. The matter was discussed at the March meetings of the Russian State Council which recommended the intensification of defensive preparations on the Finnish border where an attack of the Swedish army was most expected. St. Petersburg had also developed plans of a joint attack of Russia, Prussia and Denmark on Sweden. They assumed a simultaneous attack from three sides. The Russians were to invade Finland, the Danes – Sweden from the right side

⁴⁷ See E.G. Geijer, *op. cit.*, pp. 154–157; H.A. Barton, *Scandinavia...*, p. 97.

⁴⁸ See C.T. Odhner, *op. cit.*, pp. 189–193; I. de Madariaga, *op. cit.*, p. 228.

of Norway, the Prussians – Pomerania. The situation seemed really dangerous as many Swedish politicians and officers still favoured Russia and had been bribed by Ambassador Ivan A. Ostermann. Stockholm was also receiving more and more alarming news from St. Petersburg. At the peak of the crisis, on March 22, 1773, a former leader of the party of the “Hats”, Fredrik Axel, Count von Fersen, resigned from his seat in the State Council. Fortunately for Sweden, three courts had not agreed on the joint rules of military cooperation (reluctant position of Prussia had mostly contributed to it) and in that situation, as the Turks had broken peace talks in Bucharest, the Russians were forced to withdraw from starting a new war in the North⁴⁹.

The situation changed in the next few weeks, though. On June 1, 1773 the Russian heir to the throne, Grand Duke Paul, confirmed in Tsarskoye Selo a treaty on an exchange of Holstein for Oldenburg and Delmenhorst. It paved the way for a rapprochement of St. Petersburg and Copenhagen. In a secret clause to the treaty both sides promised that they would seek favourable circumstances to restore the previous form of government in Sweden. In such a situation all depended on a change of attitude of London and Berlin. Although Frederick II was officially writing letters to his nephew in which he was condemning his actions, in fact he strongly opposed an intervention in Stockholm. The invasion of allied courts on Sweden could make France defend the latter one and thus lead to a new war in Europe. It was the last thing the King of Prussia wished for. The conflict could reopen the Polish question and challenge Prussian acquisitions made at the expense of the Republic of Poland. Therefore, Frederick II resigned from taking Swedish Pomerania. For the same reasons the Berlin court inhibited military aspirations of Catherine II. The Russian diplomacy was to be disappointed with London’s attitude as well. England, which was initially waiting for the further course of events, deeply concerned about the first partition of Poland and an increase in the three partitioning countries’ power, definitely opposed to an open intervention in Sweden. Thus, at the end of 1773 a threat of an external interference in the internal affairs of Sweden was ultimately averted. Even the St. Petersburg court had abandoned the idea of attacking Sweden as it once again had to face the Russian-Turkish war (military actions had been re-launched in March) and the outbreak of the great Cossack rebellion started by Yemelyan Pugachev (in September 1773). Also Denmark, left alone, was not willing to take risks of a direct confrontation with Gustav III

⁴⁹ See M. Roberts, *Great Britain and the Swedish Revolution, 1772–73*, “The Historical Journal”, vol. VII, No. 1, 1964, pp. 1–46; A. Söderhjelm, *op. cit.*, p. 43; I. de Madariaga, *op. cit.*, p. 229, 231. See also *Archiv Gosudarstviennogo Sovieta*, vol. I (*Soviet v carstvovanije Jekateriny II 1768–1796*), I.A. Chistovich (ed.), St. Petersburg 1869, pp. 237–239 (The Council’s meetings of March 18/29, 1773 and March 21/April 1, 1773); R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, pp. 157–159; O. Jäger-skiöld, *Fersen Fredrik Axel (von)*, in: *SBL*, vol. XV, Stockholm 1956, p. 686.

so vigorously supported by the French diplomacy. In that way, with an active cooperation of reluctant to each other courts of London and Versailles, peace in the North was saved⁵⁰.

GUSTAV III'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS FRANCE BETWEEN 1773 AND 1776

The failure of a foreign intervention in Sweden was the undoubted success of Louis XV's cabinet. Gustav III did not seem, however, especially pleased with such a development of events. He had the burning desire to astonish the world with his famous deeds. Yet, as for the time being he was unable to realise his dreams of the winning war and getting new acquisitions for his country, he focused on strengthening his relations with the court of Versailles. The young king was very interested in everything that was happening in France. From Gustav Philip Creutz, promoted for the time being to the rank of an ambassador, he demanded detailed reports on the French court's as well as country's state. Creutz's letters were not too optimistic, though. They depicted the court of Versailles in a rather unflattering way. According to the Swedish ambassador, the old king showed less and less interest in the state affairs and his ministry was in an open conflict with the entire society. A serious internal crisis in France was certain to begin soon. Yet, news about Louis XV's problems was overshadowed by the tributes that French philosophers and public opinion were paying to the ruler of Sweden. Voltaire and Jean François Marmontel praised him. Gustav III himself, in turn, started a regular correspondence with Madame de Brionne, Countess of Egmont, Mrs Feydeau de Mesmes as well as the countesses La Marck and Boufflers. As a result, he received from Paris detailed, though not always objective, information about events that were taking place there⁵¹. The French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Emmanuel Armand, Duke of Aiguillon, was one of the most faithful friends of Sweden as well. Thus,

⁵⁰ See C.T. Odhner, *op. cit.*, pp. 173–182, 232–235; H.A. Barton, *Scandinavia...*, pp. 84, 93; A. Geffroy, *op. cit.*, pp. 184–185, 188–192, 195–201; idem, *Introduction*, in: *Recueil des instructions...*, pp. XCIX–C; O. Jägerskiöld, *Den svenska...*, pp. 259–267; R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, pp. 146–147; B. Hennings, *Gustav III...*, p. 65. For more detailed discussion on the above-mentioned problems see E. Tegnér, *Bidrag till kännedom om Sveriges yttre politik närmast efter statshvältningen 1772*, in: idem, *Valda skrifter*, vol. V, Stockholm 1906, pp. 97–192; M. Roberts, *Great Britain...*, pp. 1–46.

⁵¹ See A. Geffroy, *op. cit.*, pp. 204–274. More about Gustav III's relations with his Parisian correspondents see M.C. A. de Ségur d'Armaillé, *La comtesse d'Egmont, fille du maréchal de Richelieu (1740–1773), d'après ses lettres inédites à Gustave III*, Paris 1890; B. Hennings, *Grevinnan d'Egmont och Gustav III*, Stockholm 1920; *Gustav III och grevinnan de Boufflers. En brevväxling från vanskapskultens tidevarv*, B. Hennings (ed.), Stockholm 1928. See also *Lettres de Gustave III à la comtesse de Boufflers et de la comtesse au roi*, A. Vivie (ed.), Paris 1898.

the Stockholm court was anxiously observing attempts made to undermine his position in the French ministry. In early July 1773 Gustav Philip Creutz wrote to Ulrik Scheffer that an intrigue was being plotted in Versailles to overthrow the duke and deprive him of his management of the ministry. Fortunately, nothing came out of it and the duke remained at his post. According to Creutz, it was a good thing for Sweden because at that time the Duke of Aiguillon's attention was focused on the Swedish case. The minister was well aware of the fact that if France did not prevent a foreign intervention in Stockholm, it would always be ashamed of it and would not find any allies nor friends in the future. As the duke's policy was peaceful and the court of Versailles was willing to avoid a new war at all costs, Creutz tried to provide Gustav III with adequate resources for sea and land armaments. He also assured his lord that he would soon receive from France 547 thousand *livres* and another 1,5 million *livres* would be paid to him at the end of 1773⁵².

Over the next few months, however, the Swedish-French relations became considerably complicated. On May 10, 1774 Louis XV died of smallpox. His twenty-year old grandson, Louis XVI, ascended the throne. First of all, he dismissed hated by the public ministers of the late king – Chancellor René Maupeou and the Controller-General of Finances, Father Joseph Marie Terray. In July, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Emmanuel Armand, Duke of Aiguillon, was dismissed, too. On August 1, 1774 he wrote to Gustav III that he had lost his office and influences at court. Yet, he assured the king of his commitment to Sweden. He promised to serve a friend of his dead lord who was the most faithful and useful ally of France and reminded Gustav III that Louis XV was his sincere friend until the very last moment of his life. One of principle aims of his policy was to maintain Sweden's independence as well as its ruler's authority. The duke also assumed that the grandson of the late king inherited from his grandfather that way of thinking. Finally, the Duke of Aiguillon assured Gustav III that despite his withdrawal from public affairs, he would look into Swedish affairs and would always belong to the group of Sweden's most faithful friends⁵³. Yet, the duke was making empty promises as he had lost all influence and had played no important role in the political arena ever more. The Stockholm court was legitimately concerned about a change to the French throne and the dismissal of the former Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Sweden must have become even more concerned when it discovered that the political crisis in Versailles coincided with an end of the Russo-Turkish war. Signed on July 10/21, 1774 peace treaty of Küçük Kaynarca was, in fact,

⁵² See G.P. Creutz to U. Scheffer, Paris, July 4, 1773, in: *Recueil des documens* (Manderström), pp. 63–65.

⁵³ See E. A., Duke of Aiguillon to Gustav III, Veiret, August 1, 1774, in: *ibidem*, pp. 92–94.

a great triumph of the Russian policy. The Russians obtained not only an access to the Black Sea and other significant territorial acquisitions (Azov, Kinburn, Kerch, Yeni-Kale, Kabardia) but also the right to submit to the Turkish government matters concerning Christian population. Moreover, because an independence of the Crimean and Kuban Tatars from the sultan was formally announced, it opened the way for the Russians to an unlimited penetration of the Crimean Khanate⁵⁴. At the same time, Catherine II's troops started to mercilessly suppress Pugachev's rebellion that had already spread over the vast areas of the Russian empire between the Volga River and the Ural Mountains. Thus, it could be assumed that the empress would be able to devote more of her time and attention to Swedish matters soon. Fortunately for Gustav III, the French cabinet was not going to change anything in its current policy towards Sweden. The former Ambassador to Stockholm and the co-organiser of the August coup d'état, Charles Gravier, Count of Vergennes, became a new French Minister of Foreign Affairs⁵⁵.

At the time when Vergennes became the Minister of Foreign Affairs the European balance was assured by the Russo-Prussian alliance. For Prussia, however, an alliance with Russia was a necessary evil. This was so since only the St. Petersburg court reaped the benefits from it. Frederick II was forced to pay subsidies to Rumyantsev's army and passively observe actions of Russian troops in the East. Yet, after the first partition of Poland he was an ally of St. Petersburg as he wanted to prevent the renewal of an old alliance of imperial courts. As Szymon Askenazy vividly described "The Russian-Prussian system was opposed by even more rotten Franco-Austrian system". The Austrian ally had cheated France and took part in the first

⁵⁴ See. S. Askenazy, *Sprawa wschodnia przed Wielkim Sejmem*, in: idem, *Dwa stulecia. XVIII i XIX. Badania i przyczynki*, 2nd ed., Warszawa 1903, pp. 216–217; Z. Wójcik, *Dzieje Rosji 1533–1801*, Warszawa 1971, p. 300.

⁵⁵ Vergennes was promoted thanks to the chief adviser of Louis XVI, Jean Frédéric de Maurepas. According to many contemporary observers, the Count of Vergennes, always reluctant to Vienna, was an old and cautious veteran. One of his biggest critics, Father Jean-François Georgel, wrote about a new minister as follows: "His acuity did not give him a real talent... His mind was too timid and too cautious to be capable of great moves that could amaze and attract the public opinion; we saw that he was moving only at the ground level, sometimes making false steps but never falling dangerously". See *Mémoires de l'abbé Georgel pour servir à l'histoire des événements de la fin du XVIIIe siècle*, vol. I, Paris 1820, p. 374. As cited in J. Baszkiewicz, *Ludwik XVI*, Wrocław 1983, p. 36. Also according to S. Askenazy: "Vergennes was not suitable for a position of a Minister of a pre-revolutionary France. He was too prudent and only on paper. He had neither courage nor imaginativeness. He was timid and easily outfaced". See idem, *op. cit.*, pp. 223–224. Only J. Feldman appreciates Vergennes as he reminds that "he had spent the best period of his life not in chancelleries but at responsible diplomatic stations in contact with people and events in which he had played an active and sometimes decisive role. Such an activity must have given him a gift of foresight, decisiveness and speed of operation...". See idem, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

partition of Poland to which the court of Versailles did not want to admit as it perceived it as a clear violation of the European balance of power. Thus, after 1772, France's alliance with Austria was purely formal, although for a long time it was fictitiously functioning⁵⁶. According to Józef Feldman, "the new Minister of Foreign Affairs [thus – author's note] had to face up to a tedious task to rebuild France's weakened credit of trust, restore its prominent position among European powers. Vergennes made those attempts look peaceful as he wanted smaller principalities to trust France once again. Yet, from the very beginning he was looking for any weaknesses of the opponent, waiting for the moment to take revenge on him. England was his first opponent as the main slayer and perpetrator of the greatest defeats of Louis's monarchy. England's conflict with American colonies gave Vergennes the opportunity to a hidden at first and then open opposition against the British. Austria was his second antagonist, still more dangerous as it was France's official ally. Vergennes was closely observing its actions in German as well as the eastern territories and, without escaping to the sword or creating new conflicts, was able to effectively stop the growing imperialism of Joseph II. Such French policy had entailed a number of serious consequences. As Vergennes had opposed to England and had made the Habsburgs' plans impossible, he was, in fact, forced to save other powers and try to make alliances with them. He was trying to get Russia's support against England. He was using his old tricks as to gain Prussian support against Austria. As for Prussia he was only carrying on an old policy and repeating old mistakes. As for Russia, he became the executor of an orientation which, although already visible in the momentary flashes of the French diplomacy, only under his government reached a status of an official foreign policy of the monarchy"⁵⁷.

For the time being, however, the position of the court of Versailles towards Russia did not seem to change. The views of Charles de Vergennes on both, international relations and future relations of Sweden with Louis XVI's country were reflected in an instruction of September 3, 1774 for a new French Ambassador to Stockholm, Pierre Chrysostème de Bonnac, Count of Usson (Dusson). The minister wrote in the document that the revolution of 1772 had been aimed to eliminate the anarchy and make Sweden independent of St. Petersburg. Thus, Louis XV had decided to support Gustav III and protect him from the expected revenge of Catherine II. For that purpose the late king had offered the ruler of Sweden to conclude a defensive alliance and had granted him three-year subsidies of 2,4 million francs as to improve the state of the Swedish army and navy. Although the conclusion of an alliance had been postponed, the subsidies were still being regularly paid. As for the

⁵⁶ See S. Askenazy, *op. cit.*, pp. 219–223.

⁵⁷ See J. Feldman, *op. cit.*, pp. 16–17.

current position of Sweden, Vergennes admitted that Russia was the latter's most dangerous neighbour. It had long been interfering with Swedish internal affairs and had been maintaining the anarchy in the country. Gustav III was unfavourable towards Russia but he was right at perceiving Catherine II as a hidden enemy. On that occasion, Vergennes did not fail to point out that the King of Sweden "should consider that ruler a hidden enemy who is only waiting for the right moment to explode... He should distrust her sensitive words and, while pretending to believe in the sincerity of a current friendship, protect himself against attacks, intrigues and blows she would be willing to cast on him in secret". It should be also feared that after having concluded peace with Turkey the tsarina would pay her attention to Sweden. The King of Prussia, in turn, was Sweden's neighbour from the Pomeranian side. Unfortunately, he was as hostile to Sweden as the tsarina was. This was so since he was the closest ally of Russia. Moreover, Sweden had been long competing with Denmark, too. The latter one had also connections with Russia and, therefore, should be treated as a country hostile to the Stockholm court. As for England, it had distanced itself from Sweden because of the latter's close relations with France. England was intensively trading with Russia and thus was politically cooperating with the St. Petersburg court. In fact, however, London had no valid reason to be an enemy of Sweden. Moreover, the London court was absorbed by problems with American colonies and did not seem to be dangerous. Sweden was, in turn, a natural and faithful ally of Turkey. Both countries had a common enemy, Russia. What is more, Turkey should be considered the best ally of France and Sweden if war with countries hostile to the August coup of 1772 broke out. In the same context the Vienna court should be treated as a neutral one. Vienna would definitely oppose the Prussian seizure of the Swedish Pomerania. Yet, only France and Turkey were really interested to help Sweden against Russia. The French Minister of Foreign Affairs predicted that Denmark's resistance would be easiest to break when taking into account group of countries unfriendly to Sweden. Thus, d'Usson was instructed to try to make a rapprochement between Stockholm and Copenhagen possible. As for the internal situation in Sweden, Vergennes warned his ambassador that there was a strong opposition to Gustav III which was interconnected with Russia. In the country there were many unhappy people and the government had big financial problems. Economic and financial difficulties considerably reduced the king's popularity among people. Yet, the future of Sweden would mainly depend on him. The king had to balance the budget and reduce expenses as well as splendour of his court. All these would certainly increase his popularity and lower the number of his enemies. Pierre d'Usson was also ordered to assure the King's of France full support for his foreign and internal policy.

Still, Gustav III should, above all, reform his country and strengthen its defence. According to Vergennes, the main task of d'Usson was to persuade the King of Sweden to do everything that would be most appropriate for his current capabilities and future interests. On that occasion, the ambassador was also to ensure the king that France would do anything to help him both, at home and abroad.

Later on, the instruction described French proceedings in the event of a simultaneous attack of Russia, Prussia and Denmark on Sweden. The minister predicted that in such a case Sweden's safety would be guaranteed by a French squadron that would appear in the Baltic Sea. He recalled that France had long been seeking for London's permission to transport its troops to Sweden. It had succeeded in its efforts and the British would not make any obstacles in that regard. Although the previous year Russia had not begun hostile actions against the Stockholm court and Catherine II had assured Gustav III of her friendship, the peace treaty of Küçük Kaynarca signed on July 21, 1774 endangered the future peace in the North. If war was to break out, the French fleet and soldiers' crossing through the Sound would be the most difficult task. Yet, Vergennes assumed that the court of Versailles should have no problems in getting the Danish permission. Although the Swedish king had repeatedly hinted that he would prefer cash benefit instead of military reinforcements, France was ready to send him at any time four thousand soldiers. As Vergennes knew Gustav III very well, he warned his ambassador to be cautious in his talks with the king as not to encourage him to start an irresponsible adventure. Because of long-lasting financial difficulties of Sweden the court of Versailles decided to grant it additional subsidies of 500 thousand *livres*. On that occasion, the Count of Usson was ordered to try to sign a new subsidy treaty for next three years. He was also to pay a special attention to the things French money was going to be spent on. He was to carefully observe actions of ministers of Russia, Prussia, England and Denmark in Stockholm and establish a close cooperation with Spanish and Austrian envoys. It was also clear that the court of Versailles did not intend to start any serious negotiations with Sweden. The role of d'Usson was limited to a careful observation of Sweden's internal and international affairs. Thus, he was ordered to regularly correspond with French envoys to St. Petersburg, Vienna and Constantinople⁵⁸. The instruction of Vergennes showed that the court of Versailles intended to persuade Gustav III to adopt a peaceful foreign policy, reduce unnecessary expenses and peacefully reform both, state structures and the Swedish

⁵⁸ See *Mémoire pour servir d'instruction au sieur comte D'Usson, allant en Suède en qualité d'ambassadeur de Sa Majesté auprès du roi de Suède, 3 Septembre 1774*, in: *Recueil des instructions...*, pp. 444–464; J. Feldman, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

society. Needless to say, such a political programme was far away from the dreams and hopes of the young ruler.

A new French ambassador arrived to Stockholm on December 9, 1774. He was very well received by the king. Gustav III was determined to maintain good relations with the court of Versailles. It should be noticed, though, that both cabinets were closely observing each other. In letters to the King of Sweden Madame de Boufflers described in detail, usually adding some malicious comments as well, first actions of the ministerial team of Louis XVI. Gustav III, in turn, inquired d'Usson about effects of French reforms. When it turned out that French reforms were not only limited but also inconsistent, Gustav III discreetly began to pity Louis XVI's weakness and indecisiveness, using it as a subtle excuse to compare the new the King of France with himself. Gustav III was also one of the first European politicians who had realised that the new French government was even weaker than the previous one. The King of Sweden quickly concluded that he could be quite independent in his foreign policy and would not have to scrupulously adhere to advices, guidance and recommendations of Louis XVI's incompetent ministry. Yet, the latter fact did not prevent him from ostentatious efforts to involve both countries in question more intimately. On August 19, 1775 Gustav III authorised Gustav Philip Creutz to start negotiations on an extension of a signed in February 1773 and expiring at the end of the year subsidy treaty with France. The Paris negotiations of Creutz had been successful and on September 25, 1775 the subsidy treaty with France was renewed for another three years. The new alliance came into force on January 1, 1776 and assured the Stockholm court with funds necessary to continue reforms and heal public finances⁵⁹.

ATTEMPTS AT A RAPPROCHEMENT TO THE ST. PETERSBURG COURT

To become independent of the French Minister of Foreign Affairs and activate his own foreign policy, at the turn of 1776 and 1777 Gustav III decided to make an agreement with the St. Petersburg court. Since the August coup the Swedish-Russian relations had greatly deteriorated and it even seemed that both courts sought an open conflict. The Swedish envoy to Istanbul, Ulrik Celsing, was supporting anti-Russian intrigues of France and urged the

⁵⁹ See A. Geffroy, *op. cit.*, pp. 275–287, 305, 312; *Recueil des instructions...*, p. 443; A. Söderhjelm, *op. cit.*, pp. 43–44; H.A. Barton, *Gustav III...*, pp. 15–16; R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, pp. 196–198. As regards an importance of French subsidies to Swedish finances and Sweden's foreign policy's dependence on France see L. Stavenow, *Den gustavianska...*, pp. 49–50. See also *Pleinpouvoirs à l'ambassadeur Extraordinaire le Comte Gustave Philippe de Creutz pour signer un renouvellement de la Convention du Secours Extraordinaire*, Ekolund, August 19, 1775, RA, Gallica vol. 555.

Turks not to comply with conditions of the peace treaty of Küçük Kaynarca. St. Petersburg had not abandoned old plans of restoring the Swedish constitution of 1720, either. Ivan M. Simolin was the Russian diplomat in Stockholm who soon after his arrival to the capital of Sweden started to create a strong opposition against Gustav III. Yet, thanks to Nikita Panin's efforts, the Swedish-Russian relations became more friendly again. The main diplomat of the Russian state initiated a direct exchange of correspondence between the empress and the King of Sweden. In the spring of 1777 Catherine II graciously responded to an earlier letter of Gustav III. It paved the way for a personal encounter of both rulers. Despite a clear displeasure of the Versailles court and a formal *veto* of Charles de Vergennes, on June 7, 1777 the king, accompanied by Ulrik Scheffer and Henrik af Trolle, left Stockholm for the St. Petersburg *rendez-vous* with the ruler of Russia. The first meeting of the ruler of Sweden with his cousin was held in an atmosphere of mutual respect and affectation. A secret conversation in Catherine II's office lasted half an hour. Yet, Gustav III made bad impression on Catherine II. The probable cause of such an antipathy was the fact that the "Semiramis of the North" was jealous of fame and admiration her young cousin had received abroad and saw a very dangerous opponent in him. After that first conversation the king was only able to get an unspecific promise of the tsarina that she would not be first to attack his lands. Gustav III also failed in weakening Catherine II's old relations with the Copenhagen court. This was so since the tsarina refused to negotiate on that issue. While in St. Petersburg, Gustav III met with Grigory A. Potemkin and Peter A. Rumyantsev as well. Accompanied by both officials he was visiting public institutions of the Russian capital and arousing huge agitation among its citizens. On Gustav III's leave Catherine II reassured him of her friendship, promised to write to him regularly and gave him expensive gifts. One should not have false impression, though, judging only by an ostentatious mutual politeness of both rulers, that the St. Petersburg visit of the King of Sweden was a success. Gustav III was deceived by the game of appearances and treated a promise of a confidential correspondence with the empress as his great political success. The reality, however, was very far from his imagination. At the same time when Catherine II was writing private letters to Gustav III, her diplomats took steps to strengthen cooperation with Denmark and rebuild the Russian party in Stockholm. Thus, first attempts at a rapprochement to Russia and making Swedish foreign policy independent from Versailles proved to be a complete failure⁶⁰.

⁶⁰ See C.T. Odhner, *op. cit.*, pp. 394–397, 485–486; R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, pp. 199–206; Catherine II to Gustav III, Tsarskoye Selo, May 20/31, 1777, in: *Recueil des documens* (Manderström), pp. 121–122; O. Jägerskiöld, *Den svenska...*, p. 272; B. Hennings, *Gustav III...*, pp. 249–250; A. Söderhjelm, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

In 1778, however, another turning point in the international arena took place. After the childless death of the Bavarian Elector, Maximilian Joseph (he died on December 30, 1777) the issue of the so-called Bavarian succession appeared. The successor of Maximilian Joseph, Charles Theodore, Elector Palatine of the Rhine, yielded under pressure of the emperor and gave him, violating the law, one third of Bavaria. Under that agreement, in January 1778, Joseph II began to occupy lands of the Electorate. The emperor believed that he would get France's approval for his actions and win suspicious Frederick II by recognising his succession rights for Ansbach and Bayreuth. Yet, Charles de Vergennes claimed that the imbalance in Germany in Austria's favour would be unfavourable to France and stated that the Bavarian case could not be a *casus foederis*. Frederick II, in turn, who in October 1777 renewed his old alliance with the St. Petersburg court, did not intend to allow the absorption of Bavaria by an old rival of the Hohenzollerns monarchy. Defending "German freedom", in the summer of 1778, Prussian troops marched into the Czech Republic and started a short-term war of the Bavarian succession. At the same time, the Versailles ministry decided to join the war between Great Britain and its rebellious colonies in North America. In February 1778 the Franco-American alliance was signed in Paris and in June first fights between the English and French fleet began. Gustav III was equally interested in both conflicts. He did not intend, however, to be directly involved in any of them. He decided to take advantage of the turmoil of war to pursue his own political plans. He concentrated his attention on Denmark. Johan Christopher Toll was sent to that country with the task to assess both, the situation and possibility of an unexpected invasion on Copenhagen. Gustav III departed shortly after Toll and in May 1778 he paid a surprise *incognito* visit at the Danish court. After his short stay in Copenhagen the king confirmed his belief that an attack on Denmark was possible. As, in turn, Gustav III counted on the escalation of Prussian-Austrian and Franco-British conflicts, in August 1778 he planned to join to Sweden bishoprics of Bremen and Werden which from the end of the Great Northern War belonged to the electors of Hanover sitting on the British throne. For the time being, however, the King of Sweden had to resign from both, starting hostilities against Denmark and presenting his territorial claims in London. This was so since his own home affairs were to be urgently regulated. Six years after the August coup had passed and next *Riksdag* had to be convened again⁶¹.

⁶¹ See E. Rostworowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 694–695, 803, W. Czapliński, A. Galos, W. Korta, *Historia Niemiec*, Wrocław 1981, p. 411; S. Askenazy, *op. cit.*, pp. 219–220, 226; R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, pp. 207–209; O. Jägerskiöld, *Den svenska...*, p. 278.

THE RIKSDAG OF 1778–1779 AND CHANGES IN THE INTERNAL POLICY

Gustav III and his advisers did not have any reason to fear a meeting with the *Riksdag*. Public finances had been, in fact, healed and state debt had been slightly reduced. The monetary reform had been successfully carried out. A corrupt and inefficient judiciary had been repaired as well. Abuses on the part of the bureaucracy had been stopped. The army had been reformed, it was better equipped and better commanded than before. The reorganised navy was already meeting the needs and capabilities of the state. The state of the economy was more than satisfactory, too. All those changes had been made over a relatively short period of time. Thus, estates were convened in Stockholm on September 30, 1778 as the government was counting on their loyal cooperation. The official reason for convening the *Riksdag* was an expected birth of the heir to the throne. In fact, the king needed estates' approval for Liljencrantz's monetary reform, changes proposed to the banking system as well as the renewal of taxes granted to the government in 1772. Yet, government's hopes for a peaceful Diet's sitting were not to be fulfilled. The former leader of the "Hats", Fredrik Axel, Count von Fersen, started to organise a regular opposition in the House of the Knights. As the noble opposition had nothing to criticise the government, it was not supported by three lower chambers. Moreover, Gustav III skilfully took advantage of the birth of his son on November 1, 1778. On November 10 little Gustav Adolf was baptised in the royal chapel and delegates of all four estates were present at the ceremony as godfathers of the heir to the Swedish throne. Still, a part of the House of the Knights remained intransigent. On January 4, 1779 Fersen's Financial Committee of the *Riksdag* presented the king with a written response to his proposals on banking and tax laws. It was definitely critical and aroused great sensation as did later (dated January 17) speech of one of the deputies who questioned some provisions of the constitution of 1772 as inconsistent with Gustav II Adolf's ordinance on the organisation of the *Riksdag* of 1617. Yet, the government ignored both occurrences and the king quickly ended the Diet's session.

It should be said that the *Riksdag* of 1778–1779 was an undisputed success of Gustav III. His monetary proposals were fully accepted and taxes renewed until the next *Riksdag*. Estates did not oppose the elimination of barriers stemming the flood of foreign capital as well as experienced traders, entrepreneurs and workers necessary for further development of the Swedish trade and industry. Thus, in January 1779 the *Riksdag* adopted a declaration of a religious freedom in Sweden. Moreover, during the meeting of the Parliament Gustav III realised his old idea on restoring abandoned in 1720 division of the nobility into three classes. The House of the Knights was once again

divided into three distinct, separate deliberative colleges (earls and barons, descendants of members of the State Council and lower nobility). According to the king, "this division should end a democracy, which dominated in the House of the Knights and made the first estate of the kingdom similar to the unruly crowd, unaware of its rights and interests". When in January 1779 Gustav III was closing the Parliament's meeting he had every reason to be satisfied. His government managed to push through all legislative proposals and an attempt of foreign interference in the internal affairs of his country proved to be a complete failure. During the *Riksdag* of 1778–1779 the Russian envoy, Ivan M. Simolin, and the Danish one, Christian Frederik, Baron von Gyldenkrone, were preparing a conspiracy of malcontents who were to ask Russia and Denmark to restore the constitution of 1720, the fact that would give both courts opportunity for an armed intervention. A few oppositionists from the House of the Knights were even won for the case but Fredrik Axel von Fersen refused to participate in it and the whole action burnt to nothing. After a huge disappointment in Stockholm the St. Petersburg court decided to recall Simolin from the capital of Sweden and his successor, *chargé d'affaires* Ivan S. Rückman (Rikman) was ordered to closely observe Gustav III's actions but without interfering with them⁶².

Gustav III's successes in political matters, however, were not accompanied by those concerning his family matters. During the *Riksdag* of 1778–1779 scandalous quarrels between the king and his mother, Louisa Ulrika, occurred. The conflict had been growing for a long time. Already few weeks after the August coup the first argument in the royal family blew up. The king's mother, truly loved by her son, could not stand the fact that she had no impact on state affairs any more. She quickly became a huge critic of all Gustav's actions. Moreover, Louisa Ulrika could not accept her son's marriage with a Danish Princess, Sophia Magdalena, which had been imposed by the estates. Initially, also Gustav was hostile towards his wife who he had to marry against his will. In the summer of 1775, however, Adolph Fredric Munck convinced the king that for the state's sake he should have a successor to the throne. Thus, Munck ended the royal couple's separation that had lasted since 1768. He quickly became a trusted confidant of the king and the queen's lover. In February 1778 it turned out that Sophia Magdalena was pregnant. The news was badly received by both, Gustav III's younger brothers as well as an old queen who was dreaming of an enthronement of her

⁶² As regards Sweden's political situation in the autumn of 1778 and the *Riksdag*'s meetings between 1778 and 1779 see C.T. Odhner, *op. cit.*, pp. 537–579 and *ibidem*, vol. II (1779–1787), Stockholm 1896, pp. 2–20. See also G. Landberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 39–76; F. Almén, *op. cit.*, pp. 187–202; L. Stavenow, *Den gustavianska...*, pp. 50–58; R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, p. 170, pp. 182–190, 206–207; E.G. Geijer, *op. cit.*, pp. 249–250; H.A. Barton, *Scandinavia...*, pp. 112–113; Z. Anusik, *Od liberała...*, pp. 167–168.

beloved son, Frederick, Duke of Östergötland, and deeply hated her daughter-in-law and mother of the future king. Louisa Ulrika did not hesitate to openly question the origin of the heir to the throne, declaring that the queen was pregnant with Munck and, therefore, she did not intend to accept the latter's child as her grandson. Infuriated Gustav III was even thinking of exiling his mother to Pomerania. Although circumstances ultimately forced the king to reconcile with his mother, the scandal greatly commoved both, Sweden and abroad. For a few months things had calmed but the case was revived when little Gustav Adolf was born. Louisa Ulrika never believed that he was Gustav III's son and she wrote it in the letter to the king after having heard the news of the birth of the heir to the throne. The letter outraged the royal family and was badly received by both, the king's retinue and Swedish public opinion. Everyone turned against an old queen. From the end of 1778 Louisa Ulrika, boycotted by the court and condemned by the majority of the society, lived in total isolation. Only two younger children stayed with her, Frederick, Duke of Östergötland and Princess Sophia Albertina, as well as a few old servants. Gustav visited his dying mother in July 1782. On the same day a four-year old heir to the throne visited his grandmother, too. It was the first and the last meeting of an old queen with her grandson as Louisa Ulrika died in the morning of July 16, 1782⁶³.

The *Riksdag* of 1778–1779 was a turning point in the history of Gustav III's reign. In March 1779 the king's attitude had drastically changed as he started to incline towards the mysticism and freemasonry. At that time he was influenced by a well-known freemason, mystic and visionary, Johan Gustaf Halldin, whose main goal was to find a religious sanction for a quackery of Cagliostro and Mesmer. Halldin was appointed one of the royal secretaries and quickly became one of the most trusted advisers of Gustav III. It even seemed that promoted by him Swedenborgianism could jeopardise the Lutheran Church in Sweden. After Halldin there appeared in Drottningholm magicians and alchemists for whom a special laboratory was built where they were to search for the philosopher's stone. Another famous

⁶³ For more information on the affair of Sophia Magdalena with A.F. Munck, the queen's pregnancy and the accompanying scandal in the royal family see C.T. Odhner, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 517–527. See also R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, pp. 240–250; G.J. Ehrensward, *op. cit.*, pp. 328–336; B. Hennings, *Gustav III...*, pp. 108–116, 118; L. Stavenow, *Den gustavianska...*, pp. 64–70; A. Geffroy, *op. cit.*, vol. II, Paris 1867, p. 53; H.A. Barton, *Gustav III...*, p. 18; O. Nikula, *Munck Adolph Fredric*, in: *SBL*, vol. XXV, Stockholm 1985–1987, pp. 769–773. It should be added here that on August 25, 1782 Sophia Magdalena gave birth to another son, the Duke of Småland, who, however, died after seven months. It was widely believed that his real father was Adolph Fredric Munck. After the death of his younger son Gustav III and Sophia Magdalena had drifted apart and since then their marriage completely broke down. See B. Hennings, *Gustav III...*, pp. 122, 129; A. Geffroy, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 54–56.

mystic and visionary, Carl Anders Plommenfelt, arrived at the Swedish court, too. The latter was arranging sessions for the king during which spirits of Gustav II Adolf and Adolf Frederick were being summoned. Elis Schröderheim, the favourite secretary of the king and Gustav III's closest adviser on religion and the church, took an active part in those practices as well. Under the influence of his surroundings the king was slowly losing faith in the principles of the enlighten philosophy. He was not alone in it as in her letters the Countess of Boufflers, his favourite Parisian correspondent, also started to accuse philosophers of being responsible for "the current lack of faith, morality, discipline and social differentiation in France". The social unrest which took place in Sweden in 1780 was a serious warning to the king, too. In many places revolts of oppressed peasants broke out and the army had to use force to pacify the peasants. A state of emergency was proclaimed in many districts and the king was strongly supporting the idea of using extreme measures to maintain social order in the country. At the same time the king lost much of his earlier enthusiasm for internal reforms. Although they were still being carried out, the pace of changes considerably slowed down. In 1780 the freedom in the grain trade throughout the kingdom was proclaimed. The royal ordinance of January 24, 1781 granted religious freedom to all foreigners settled in Sweden (the Catholics excluded). In 1782, in turn, the Jews were allowed to settle in Stockholm and other major cities in Sweden. At the same time when Gustav was clearly losing interest in national reforms, his cultural passions were revealed. The king was spending more time on entertainment and was mainly paying attention to the theatre where he was playing the role of an impresario, an actor and a playwright. Gustav III wrote good plays and librettos for operas. It was his initiative to build first permanent stage in Stockholm which was opened in 1782 in the Royal Theatre (the Stockholm Opera). In 1782 Gustav III also sent Johan Christopher Toll to Aachen and Spa to find out secrets of the transcendental knowledge. Yet, conclusions of the royal envoy proved to be very unfavourable to all mystics and visionaries. After his return to Sweden the illusionists quickly fell out of favour and were gradually removed from the court. Still, last of them, Halldin, had not left the Stockholm court until 1788⁶⁴.

⁶⁴ As regards freemasonry and magic at Gustav III's court see C.T. Odhner, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 189 and fol., 194 and fol. Also L. Stavenow describes mystics and freemasons at the court of Gustav III. See *idem*, *op. cit.*, pp. 118–120. See also H. Lenhammar, *Tolerans och bekännelsestvärg. Studier i den svenska swedenborgianismen 1765–1795*, Uppsala 1966; B. Hennings, *Gustav III...*, pp. 174–175; R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, pp. 225–228, 230; H.A. Barton, *Gustav III...*, pp. 16–17, 19; *idem*, *Scandinavia...*, p. 112; A. Geffroy, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 320, 324–329; C. Nordmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 214–216. More about last reforms of Gustav III see B. Hennings, *Gustav III...*, pp. 81–83; C.T. Odhner, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 43 and fol.; L. Stavenow, *Den gustavianska...*, pp. 76–87. See also H. Levin, *Religionstvärg och religionfrihet i Sverige 1686–1782. Bidrag till den svenska religionslagsstiftningens historia*, Stockholm 1896. As regards Toll's stay in Aachen see J.C. Toll

In early eighties significant changes among Gustav III's advisers were made. Short after the coup d'état the king's closest associates were Ulrik Scheffer (foreign policy), Johan Liljencrantz (economic and financial matters), Carl Sparre (army and navy) and Carl Fredrik Scheffer (legal and humanitarian reforms). Since 1781, however, the king was increasingly being influenced by his new favourite, handsome and rotten to the core Gustaf Mauritz Armfelt. The new royal favourite was a corrupt and unscrupulous opportunist who was said to have taken part in a number of scandalous events. Armfelt was too young and inexperienced, though, to become the king's adviser on political matters. As he was one of the courtiers of a little heir to the throne, he quickly became a trusted friend and confidant and later (in June 1782) almost official favourite of Gustav. In November 1781 the ruler of Sweden confided Armfelt that in his opinion "the king should never allow others to control his plans". At that time, Gustav seemed to have decided on abandoning the principles of the constitutionalism and starting the king's strong reign in Sweden. Thus, he would soon begin to move away from state affairs all advisers from an old political school and replace them with people who owed his protection. A spectacular sign announcing upcoming changes in the current government was Ulrik Scheffer's resignation from the post of the President of the Chancellery in the spring of 1783 and his complete withdrawal from public life. Although Scheffer was overbearing and difficult to live with, he was greatly respected in Europe and widely regarded as one of the pillars of the Swedish government. Yet, Scheffer opposed the king's breaking of the August constitution and was unwilling to support changes planned by Gustav III in foreign policy. Thus, in June, Gustav Philip Creutz, who for the last 17 years had been representing Sweden's interests in Versailles, was appointed a new *kanslipresident*. He was much more obedient to the king. When in the autumn of 1783 Gustav III went on a long trip abroad, the Council of National Defence took over the king's responsibilities. It was contradictory to the constitution of August 21, 1772 which provided for in the absence of the monarch the country's executive power should become the responsibility of the Senate. The Council composed of the new head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Gustav Philip Creutz, admiral and commander of the Navy, Henrik af Trolle, Johan Christopher Toll, the actual head of the Ministry of War, and his closest associate, Johan Gustaf von Carlson. The monarch fully trusted all those people. While making appointments to the Council of National Defence, Gustav III deliberately excluded from its members the nominal head of the Ministry of War, Carl Sparre, who earlier had been regarded as his main adviser on military matters. As a close friend

to Gustav III, Aachen, June 20 and 27, 1782, C.W. Lilliecrona, *Fältmarskalken greve Johan Christopher Toll. Biografisk teckning*, vol. I, Stockholm 1849, pp. 220–222.

to Fredrik Axel von Fersen, though, Carl Sparre had never been a *persona grata* at court and his demission had been long awaited. In 1784 another important change was made in the king's retinue. In March Admiral Henrik af Trolle unexpectedly died. After his death Carl August Ehrensvärd became a new commander of the fleet and king's adviser on naval matters. Admiral Fredric Henrik af Chapman was his deputy and closest collaborator. The latter one quickly took control over current works of the Ministry of the Navy. Initially, Gustav Philip Creutz, an experienced and prudent politician, was the most important person from the king's retinue. Gustav III's trust was quickly won, however, by Johan Christopher Toll who was regarded the enemy of the constitution who strongly urged the king to invade Denmark. Gustav III very often sent Toll on various secret, delicate and complex diplomatic missions. After having returned from Aachen and Spa, still in 1782, he was sent to Warsaw to negotiate a marriage of the Swedish ruler's sister, Princess Sophia Albertina, with Stanisław August Poniatowski. Although matrimonial plans of the Stockholm court had not worked out, Toll's excellent report on the political situation in Poland was highly appreciated by the king. Gustav III also entrusted with Toll a task to assess a true state of the Prussian army which was believed to be excellent. The Swedish envoy was disgusted by what he had seen in Berlin and predicted the imminent collapse of Prussia as a great military power. In 1785, in turn, Toll went on a secret mission to Copenhagen. Every time he was greatly recognised by his ruler. Thus, when on October 30, 1785 the *kanslipresident* Gustav Philip Creutz died, Johan Christopher Toll became the closest collaborator of the king and the adviser on the matters of army, navy and foreign policy⁶⁵.

⁶⁵ See B. Hennings, *Gustav III...*, pp. 72–75, 252–253; C.T. Odhner, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 97 and fol., 210 and fol., 216 and fol., 223 and fol., 239 and fol., 378 and fol., 417–422; R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, pp. 252–255, 259; O. Jägerskiöld, *Den svenska...*, p. 249; H.A. Barton, *Gustav III...*, p. 20; idem, *Scandinavia...*, p. 135; *Ögonvitten om Gustav III*, B. Hennings (ed.), Stockholm 1960, p. 183; L. Stavenow, *Den gustavianska...*, p. 130. See also E. Tegnér, *Gustaf Mauritz Armfelt. Studier ur Armfelts efterlemnade papper samt andra handskrifvna och tryckta källor*, vol. I (*Armfelt och Gustaf III*), Stockholm 1883, pp. 13–49; L. Stavenow, *Armfelt Gustaf Mauritz*, in: *SBL*, vol. II, Stockholm 1920, pp. 203–206; L. Trulsson, *op. cit.*, pp. 542–543; G. Carstrén, *Gustav Philip Creutz*, Helsingfors 1917; idem, *Creutz Gustav Philip*, in: *SBL*, vol. IX, Stockholm 1931, pp. 136–144; G. Notini, *Carlson Johan Gustaf von*, in: *ibidem*, vol. II, p. 38; K. Kumlien, *Sparre Carl*, p. 142; K. Mellander, *Johan Christopher Toll som militär och politiker under Gustav III*, Stockholm 1933; S.G. Svenson, *op. cit.*, p. 2; A. Giron, *Trolle Henrik af*, in: *SMoK*, vol. VIII, pp. 46–47; B. Hildebrand, O. Nikula, *Ehrensvärd Carl August*, in: *SBL*, vol. XII, Stockholm 1949, pp. 440–450; G. Unger, *Chapman Fredric Henrik af*, in: *ibidem*, vol. VIII, Stockholm 1929, p. 352–362. For Toll's missions to Warsaw and Berlin see J.C. Toll to Gustav III, Warsaw, December 18, 1782, January 1 and 4, 1783 as well as Berlin, February 25, 1783, C.W. Lilliecorona, *op. cit.*, pp. 234–237.

A GROWING OPPOSITION AGAINST GUSTAV III'S REIGN: THE RIKSDAG OF 1786

Both Gustav III, increasingly attracted to the absolute monarchy, and his new advisers, supporting his efforts in that regard, first of all had to overcome an internal crisis that had been growing since the early eighties. It had been caused by an economic downturn and new crop failures in Sweden. On that occasion, most of the society expressed its dissatisfaction with the current policy of the government. The king and his advisers were accused of unnecessary spending of public money on court's entertainment and large-scale reinforcements. All those accusations were fully justified. Gustav III, in fact, did not care for his expenses. His financial policy was quickly increasing the government debt. The king's frivolous, extravagant and extremely expensive travel abroad taking place from 1783 to 1784 was also greatly criticised. Townspeople, especially from Stockholm, were increasingly dissatisfied with the liberal economic policy which lowered an importance of guilds and reduced profits of large merchants from the capital. The Lutheran clergy criticised bad moral examples given by the royal court as well as trade in church properties started by royal favourites. Both, clergy and representatives of other unprivileged estates were disgusted with the lack of religiosity at court, too. The puritan clergy even suspected the king of crypto-Catholicism. Most of those accusations were justified. Gustav III was not a religious man and during the first ten years of his reign as a head of the Swedish Church he was not interested in its problems at all. His General Vicar, Elis Schröderheim, was well known for incompetence and numerous abuses which had greatly contributed to his fatal reputation among the Swedish clergy. The nobility also began to oppose as it concluded that the revolution of 1772 had been a lost case for them. It had received nothing in exchange for the loss of its political influence. It was anxiously observing reforms undertaken by the government as it was afraid of a further weakening of its position in favour of three lower estates. Thus, the nobility wanted the king to strictly adhere to the August constitution and was reluctant to the absolutist tendencies in his policy. Therefore, an opposition of the aristocracy was of the constitutional nature and was inspired by the Enlightenment (the Swedish aristocracy was passionate about Locke, Voltaire, Rousseau, Mably, Raynal or Paine). It should be emphasised, though, that a large part of the Swedish public opinion did not share that fascination and did not approve of the enlighten philosophy and foreign cultural innovations. For example, after Louisa Ulrika's death in July 1782 Rutger Fredrik Hochschild accused in his diary the deceased queen of having brought to Sweden "a foreign taste and passion for luxury", having been encouraging the development of arts and science "the poor country could do without" and having

prompted “the spreading of deism and Voltairanism”. Gustav III followed his mother in all her cultural and intellectual interests. Thus, much of Hochschild’s criticism directed at the old queen could apply to her son as well. Ensuring safety and maintaining internal peace in Finland was an important issue for the government, too. It was closely connected with steps taken by Göran Magnus Sprengtporten. He was the younger brother of the famous co-founder of the August coup, Jakob Magnus. He was one of Gustav III’s closest friends at first. When his older brother resigned from commanding the Royal Guard and withdrew from the public life, it seemed that he would take his place at the king’s side. He was appointed a colonel, became a commander of the dragoons regiment in Finland and introduced many useful military reforms in the Grand Duchy. In 1778, however, he was on a long trip abroad and since then had become a fierce opponent of Gustav III. When in 1782 he returned to Finland from America, the Finnish separatism started. In 1784 Göran Magnus Sprengtporten turned to the king’s brother, Charles, Duke of Södermanland, with an offer to reign independent Finland, but the duke firmly rejected it. In 1785 Sprengtporten began service in the Dutch army. Then, he started to promote an idea of the Russian protection in Finland. He presented his projects to Russian envoys to The Hague (in 1785) and Stockholm (in 1786). In 1786 Sprengtporten officially joined the Russian army. Fortunately for Gustav III’s government, in the mid-eighties only few Finns shared his views⁶⁶.

Despite an increasing criticism of government’s actions and almost universal discontent, Johan Liljencantz and Johan Christopher Toll convinced the king of the need to convene the *Riksdag*. The former needed it to get new financial resources for the unbalanced budget, the latter – to gain new funds for a thorough reorganisation of the army. Both advisers assured the king of the government’s certain success. Thus, on April 2, 1786 Gustav III unexpectedly announced the convening of the *Riksdag* in May 1786. Yet, results of the election showed that the king’s associates were wrong about the public mood. Notorious malcontents were being chosen everywhere. After elections it became clear that the *Riksdag* would violently attack the government’s current policy. The nobility was dominated by anti-royalist patriots led by Fredrik Axel von Fersen. In the House of the Knights there was only a small group of the king’s supporters, headed by Johan Christopher Toll. The House of the Peasants was definitely oppositional. Only the

⁶⁶ See C.T. Odhner, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 47 and fol., 210 and fol., 480 and fol.; L. Stavenow, *Den gustavianska...*, pp. 113–117; A. Geffroy, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 61–64; H.A. Barton, *Scandinavia...*, pp. 134–137; idem, *Gustav III...*, p. 25; R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, pp. 179–181, 280–283; Rutger Fredrik Hochschilds *Memoarer*, H. Schück (ed.), vol. I, Stockholm 1908, pp. 29, 51–52, 56, 61, 66–70; E. Birck, *Sprengtporten Georg (Göran) Magnus*, in: *SMoK*, vol. VII, pp. 156–157; idem, *Sprengtporten Jakob...*, pp. 155–156.

clergy and the bourgeoisie were divided. Among significant oppositionists there was, already mentioned, Fersen but also Clas De Frietzcky, Carl Fredrik Pechlin, Gustaf Adolf Reuterholm as well as bishops Olaf Celsius, Daniel Herweghr and Johan von Engeström. Above all, Fersen demanded from the king to strictly adhere to the constitution of 1772. More radical oppositionists, like supported by Denmark and Russia Pechlin or Reuterholm, wanted a return to political principles of the "Age of Liberty". The bishops were outraged by a scandalous church administration in the country. Engeström, in turn, who was influenced by the ideals of French philosophers, hated the king for the August coup and wanted to cause huge problems to the government. Fortunately for Gustav III, the opposition had no definite plan of action and fairly moderate Count Fersen was its biggest player. He recommended his colleagues to refrain from any violent steps for the time being. A few days before the *Riksdag's* meeting the king met with Fersen and presented him with the legislative proposals of the government. The leader of an opposition stated his policy and views on the main causes of the current crisis and fiercely criticised previous actions of the government. Thus, neither of the parties reached an agreement.

On May 6, 1786 the *Riksdag* met for the first time. As usual, Gustav III gave an eloquent throne speech. The next day Elis Schröderheim read the government report on all its achievements during last eight years. He spoke about the church's state, criminal code reform, progress in trade and agriculture, settlements in Finland, the expansion of the army and navy, scientific and cultural achievements as well as high expenditures on the beautification of the capital. Yet, Schröderheim's speech made no impression on the deputies. Before further deliberations, however, the king made a significant concession to the nobility on the legislative procedure. The House of the Knights had filed a request that in all cases, tax excluded, the majority of votes of three estates was taken into account. As for tax matters, each of the estates was to vote on its own taxes only. As regards existing privileges, the agreement of all four estates was to stay in force. Gustav III agreed on that solution which was adopted by three lower chambers as well. From that time the majority of votes of three estates was needed to adopt a new law. If votes ratio was 2:2, a bill would be rejected by the *Riksdag* (formerly the ruler had the right to decide whether to accept or reject such a project). The king did not won the opposition's sympathy, though, as for the latter one it was clear that he wanted to increase his incomes without submitting a report on the state of finances (although everyone was well aware of the fact that recently the public debt had significantly increased). The deputies were also gossiping that Gustav intended to increase the scope of the king's prerogatives. Therefore, royal legislative proposals were badly received by the House

of the Knights. For example, a proposal to pay a fixed tax in cash (*passe-volans*), instead of supplying troops during their military expeditions, was strongly rejected. Such changes had been successfully introduced in Finnish regiments and the government wanted to bring that system to Sweden as well. Nobles and peasants rejected the idea. The bourgeoisie and the clergy opted for its adoption. According to the old procedure, the king could push through the government project. Yet, according to the new regulation which he had accepted, the proposal of the government was rejected.

The government had to fight fiercely for subsidies (extraordinary taxes) as well. Finally, after stormy debates, the estates agreed on those taxes but established them for only four years and lowered them by a symbolic one percent (as compared to the subsidies from 1778). The proposal received the majority of votes in all four chambers. Yet, while discussing new taxes, representatives of all estates complained about government's numerous abuses committed since the end of the last *Riksdag*. The king was presented with a long list of requests and complaints. Finally, a sensitive issue of an alcohol distillation had to be discussed. The Parliamentary Committee was ready to grant the king extraordinary taxes of approximately 620 thousand *riksdalers* a year if free alcohol distillation was restored. The House of the Knights was strongly opposed to the king's monopoly. De Frietzcky and Fersen were very eloquent. In the House of the Peasants the royal proposal on maintaining the existing system of distillery was rejected by 141 deputies. Only 16 of them approved of it. Other royal proposals were also being rejected. Thus, Gustav III concluded that he would gain nothing more from that troublesome *Riksdag* which at any moment could turn into a dangerous one. After seven weeks Gustav III ended its meetings. The king lost battles in all fields. He had failed to push through his legislative proposals. What was even worse, after the *Riksdag* there was less money in the treasury than before⁶⁷.

ABSOLUTIST TENDENCIES IN GUSTAV III'S INTERNAL POLICY

Gustav III drew an important conclusion after the *Riksdag* of 1786. He realised that in order to effectively govern the country he had to divide the opposition and isolate the nobility. In June he reduced by 25% the amount

⁶⁷ A detailed discussion on aims and results of the *Riksdag* of 1786 see C.F. Waern, *1786 års riksdag*, no place, 1868. See also C.T. Odhner, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 374, 423–429, 430–474; L. Stavenow, *Den gustavianska...*, pp. 135, 137–144; R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, pp. 277–280, 283, 284–287, 288–291; F. Almén, *op. cit.*, pp. 202–208; A. Geffroy, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 64; A. Söderhjelm, *op. cit.*, p. 51; H.A. Barton, *Scandinavia...*, pp. 138–139; E. Lönnroth, *op. cit.*, p. 103; B. Boëthius, *De Frietzcky Clas*, in: *SBL*, vol. X, Stockholm 1931, pp. 439–452; F. Almén, *Pechlin Carl Fredrik*, in: *SMoK*, vol. VI, Stockholm 1949, pp. 47–48; S. Carlsson, *Reuterholm Gustaf Adolf*, in: *ibidem*, pp. 251–252; B. Hildebrand, *Engeström Johan*, in: *SBL*, vol. XIII, Stockholm 1950, pp. 610–615; Z. Anusik, *Od liberała...*, pp. 172–174.

of taxes for peasants that had been adopted by the *Riksdag*. He also rejected the idea of a tobacco monopoly and gained the sympathy of the bourgeoisie. The most important thing, though, was to reorganise the church. Schröderheim was finally dismissed and two new, highly skilled advisers from the clergy, Carl Gustaf Nordin and Olof Wallquist, appeared in Gustav III's retinue. The latter one was appointed the Bishop of Wexiö. The king made him also the head of the commission which was to reform the church. Nordin, in turn, had to play a great role behind the scenes as he proved to be a loyal and devoted to the king royalist. It should not be surprising that he soon became a private adviser of Gustav III on religious and political matters. He had a significant impact on the ruler as his suggestions were implemented in nine out of ten cases. Both, Nordin and Wallquist greatly contributed to the reform of the Swedish Church as well as stopped abuses and ended corruption. Gustav III was gradually becoming an autocrat, though. After the failure of the last *Riksdag* he definitively abandoned the concept of the government's cooperation with representatives of the estates and wanted to introduce an absolute power against provisions of the constitution that had been adopted 14 years before. In November 1786 Johan Liljencrantz was dismissed. He was the last minister from an old political school who was able to keep his position in Gustav III's government for such a long time. Liljencrantz was a true financier, he opposed the king's extravagant spending and tried to balance the budget. The old minister was well aware of the fact that his own credit was running out. He also knew that he could no longer increase the public debt. Thus, when he refused to finance the new ventures of the government, the king promoted him to the rank of senator and appointed Toll's protégé, Baron Eric Ruuth, as a new Minister of Finances. He was the king's marionette as the latter one began to control public finances on his own. Meanwhile, Johan Christopher Toll was promoted to the rank of major-general and appointed the first adjutant of the king. Thus, after the king, he became the most important person in the country. In 1787 Gustav III, Toll and Ruuth decided to restore the right to distil vodka at home. It was enthusiastically adopted by the majority of peasants. The king fulfilled his dream of depriving the nobility of a political support of the unprivileged. As for the restoration of the right to distil home-brew alcohol, Gustav III explained it to his closest adviser: "The marriage of the peasantry and the nobility has ended now, the fact that is very useful to us". From the government's point of view, the breakdown of the opposition was a task of a primary importance. This was so since at the end of 1786 Gustav III and Johan Christopher Toll started preparations for the hostilities. The king was not going to hide his intentions. During one of celebrations he stated that: "The Swedes seem to be tired of mild and peaceful reign and begin to miss more stringent

treatment. If we had started a war, they might have become more obedient. Who knows, maybe one day their expectations will be met?". Gustav III did not speak the whole truth, though. The decision to start a war had already been made. The king and his closest associates were waiting for the first opportunity. They were also frantically looking for a suitable opponent. It was increasingly evident that the St. Petersburg court would be perfectly suitable to that end⁶⁸.

While deciding on starting the war, Gustav III did not have to be concerned about the position of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. After Ulrik Scheffer's resignation the ministry had been deeply changed. The position of the Chancellor College had been further weakened. In 1783 also Melkior Falkenberg resigned and the position of the senator remained vacant since then. In 1781 the Chancellor of the Court was changed as well. As Fredrik Sparre was promoted to the rank of senator he was replaced by the former Secretary of the Swedish embassy in Paris, Baron Malte Ramel. After Ulrik Scheffer's resignation Ramel was responsible for current works of the Chancellery, while the new *kanslipresident*, Gustav Philip Creutz, became one of the king's closest advisers on foreign and domestic policy. Even then, however, the Swedish diplomatic correspondence was mostly controlled by the Secretary of the Presidential Office, Ulric Gustaf Franc, whom Gustav III truly trusted. Yet, more significant changes in the organisation of the Swedish foreign service were made when Creutz died. To get even more freedom in the field of foreign policy, the king decided not to appoint a new *kanslipresident*. In the bulletin of November 1, 1785, in which Gustav III informed Swedish envoys to foreign courts that a former President of the Chancellery had died, he wrote that they had to contact him in all cases concerning both, policy and current functioning of their missions. They were to receive all commands and orders directly from him. It was also obvious that the king would communicate with Swedish missions through the Secretary of the Presidential Office. As there were vacancies as regards *kanslipresident* and the Senator of the Chancellery, from early November of 1785 Malte Ramel, the Chancellor of the Court, was to hold conferences with ministers of foreign courts accredited to Stockholm.

In April 1786 Ramel, like his predecessor Fredrik Sparre five years earlier, became a member of the State Council but Gustav III did not appoint his successor. At the same time the king concluded that he still would not fill the

⁶⁸ See C.T. Odhner, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 485 and fol., 495 and fol., 500 and fol., 519; R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, vol. II, London 1894, pp. 5–6, 8–9; O. Jägerskiöld, *Den svenska...*, p. 249; H.A. Barton, *Scandinavia...*, p. 140; idem, *Gustav III...*, p. 24; A. Geffroy, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 65; B. Hennings, *Gustav III...*, p. 258; S. Swensson, *Ruuth Eric*, in: *SMoK*, vol. VI, pp. 418–419; C.F. Corin, *Nordin Carl Gustaf*, in: *ibidem*, vol. V, Stockholm 1949, pp. 514–514. See also *Hedvig Elisabeth Charlottas dagbok*, C.C. Bonde (ed.), vol. II, Stockholm 1903, pp. 182–183; Z. Anusik, *Od liberata...*, pp. 174–175.

position of the President of the Chancellery. On April 14, 1786 he informed his representatives abroad that two days before he had temporarily nominated the senators of the kingdom, Count Johan Gabriel Oxenstierna and Baron Emanuel De Geer, who had been authorised to “take in their hands” ministerial duties. In the same letter Gustav III did not hesitate to emphasise, however, that Swedish envoys to foreign courts had to address their reports directly to him. They were to get orders directly from him, too. On April 27, 1786 both royal appointees officially started to work at the Chancellor College. The solution applied to the President of the Chancellery was temporary but it was suspected that the real goal of it was to further weaken the importance of that office. The double cast of vacant posts was used by the king in other departments of the state administration too in order to increase the influence of his own protégés. As there were vacancies at the posts of the *kanslipresident*, the Senator of the Chancellery as well as the Chancellor of the Court and there was no State Secretary for Foreign Affairs at all, the Secretary of the Presidential Office and royal favourite, Ulric Gustaf Franc, was the only permanent member of the Chancellor College that was running the foreign policy of the state. Yet, because formally he was only a low ranked Secretary of the Expedition he could not be entrusted with a task to held conferences with foreign ministers accredited to Stockholm, participate in audiences and so on. For that reason, De Geer and Oxenstierna were to be temporarily appointed deputies of the President of the Chancellery. The king’s idea was only partially successful. Emanuel De Geer did not want to be Gustav III’s marionette. During the *Riksdag* of 1786 De Geer was one of the most active members of the anti-Gustavian opposition. Thus, it was not surprising that after the closing session of the Parliament he asked the king for a leave which was finally granted to him in June 1787. Still, it was certain that before making a decision on war with Russia, Gustav III had already gained full and exclusive control over foreign affairs⁶⁹.

AN ALLIANCE WITH FRANCE AGAINST THE COURT OF COPENHAGEN. GUSTAV III’S FOREIGN POLICY BETWEEN 1778 AND 1783

In the autumn of 1778 the outbreak of the Swedish-Danish war seemed inevitable. France’s accession to the American war and the Prussian-Austrian war favoured Gustav III’s intentions. The army and navy were put on red alert. The ruler of Sweden obtained new funds as he had renewed the subsidy treaty with the French court. On December 2, 1778 the appropriate

⁶⁹ See A. Forssell, *op. cit.*, pp. 307–312; B. Hennings, *Gustav III...*, p. 257; L. Stavenow, *Den gustavianska...*, p. 133; O. Jägerskiöld, *Den svenska...*, p. 250; N. Gyllenbåga, *Oxenstierna Johan Gabriel*, in: *SMoK*, vol. V, pp. 689–691; Z. Anusik, *Od liberała...*, pp. 175–176.

agreement on it was signed in Versailles. Paragraph 1 of the convention stated that both parties would not use, either directly or indirectly, their armed forces and diplomacy against interests of the contractor but, on the contrary, would cooperate to the mutual benefit of both contracting parties. Paragraph 2 stated that both rulers would make no agreement with other countries unless it was consensual. At the same time both of them solemnly assured that they had not accepted any commitments which could hinder the implementation of the convention in question. Paragraph 3 (most important from Gustav III's point of view) obliged France to pay the Stockholm court for six years subsidies of 1,5 million francs a year in quarterly instalments. The first payment was to be made on January 1, 1779. Finally, paragraph 4 stated that the treaty would be ratified within two months from the date of its signing. Yet, at the beginning of 1779 Sweden's war preparations were suspended. Unexpectedly, Austria ended its conflict with Prussia. In February 1779 both sides started peace negotiations in Cieszyn. France and Russia were playing the role of intermediaries. During the War of Bavarian Succession the court of Versailles had not supported Austria and Catherine II had refused to support Prussia. On the other hand, the empress had been openly defending rights of princes of the Reich. Thus, on May 13, 1779 the peace treaty in Cieszyn, dictated by the Russian Ambassador, Prince Nikolai V. Repnin, divested Austria of previously obtained Bavaria and considerably strengthened the position of Catherine II who had been a guarantor of the treaty then signed in Germany. The court of Versailles also contributed to a defeat of Emperor Joseph II. France supported the Russian mediator in Cieszyn and acting hand in hand with Repnin in favour of Prussia was trying to weaken the bargaining position of the Vienna court. The French diplomacy supported Russia in the East as well. On May 21, 1779 thanks to the French Ambassador to Istanbul, François Emmanuel, Count of Saint-Priest, the Russian-Turkish convention in Ainali Kawak was signed. The Porte recognised the pro-Russian Khan Shahin Girai (Giray), accepted the new order in Crimea, expanded privileges of the Danube principalities and removed some barriers for the Russian trade. Louis XVI's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Charles de Vergennes, without hesitation sacrificed Crimea and Turkish interests for Bavaria and the hope that during the congress in Cieszyn he would be able to thwart plans of his Austrian ally. The peace treaty of Ainali Kawak offered Russia prospects for a better future as well. Catherine II's grandson, Konstantin, born in 1779, had been given that name on purpose. Thus, the agreement signed in Cieszyn had a number of important consequences. Firstly, it significantly deteriorated the Prussian-Russian relations. When Frederick II started to benefit from the alliance, it became useless for Catherine. Moreover, Prussia, for various reasons, was an inadequate ally for

Russia in the East and Frederick did not intend to destruct the Turkish power. Secondly, it heralded another, very visible, crisis in the Franco-Austrian relations. Thirdly, it opened the way for the future agreement between France and Russia. It was the last thing the Stockholm court wished for. This was so since the pacification of Europe and harmonious cooperation of French and Russian diplomacy forced Gustav III to abandon plans on invading Denmark and conquering Norway⁷⁰.

Disappointed in his hopes of conquering Norway, Gustav III started to demand from its French ally a colony in the New World, preferably in the West Indies. Therefore, on October 3, 1779 the Count of Vergennes wrote to the King of Sweden that Louis XVI had already agreed to give him one of French colonies in the Antilles. Yet, the success of that transaction would depend on further developments. First of all, France would have to persuade Britain to accept the idea. Later in his letter, Vergennes pointed out that the French diplomacy had prevented in Ainali Kawak another Russian-Turkish war. For the minister it was a great success of his policy. He also tried to convince Gustav III that the Franco-Russian rapprochement would be beneficial to the interests of Sweden as France would use its influence on St. Petersburg to alleviate an old conflict between Gustav and his cousin. It seemed, however, that arguments of the old minister did not convince Gustav III. He was still dreaming of playing an active role in the international arena. He was far from abandoning the idea of invading Denmark, too. He returned to old political plans in the summer of 1780. On June 15 he left Stockholm on his next trip abroad. He headed towards well known spas, Aachen and Spa. He spent July 1780 in Aachen. In August, in turn, he appeared in Spa where he met with representatives of the French capital's society. At that time the King of Sweden was spending much time with his two famous Parisian correspondents, countesses of Boufflers and La Marck. Social meetings, swimming and fun, however, were only a cover for the real purpose of that visit. Gustav III decided to convince Vergennes to his old idea and make the court of Versailles take part in war against Denmark. Thus, the then most important official in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Secretary of the Presidential Office, Ulric Gustaf Franc, was accompanying the king in that trip. The secretary was working hard as he was corresponding with both, the Stockholm court and Swedish diplomatic missions abroad. Gustav III was fully satisfied with Franc's way of fulfilling all responsibilities. In a letter to Fredrik Sparre, written in Spa on August 7, 1780, Franc reported to the Chancellor

⁷⁰ See Copie d'une convention conclure entre S.M. le Roi de Suède et S.M. le Roi de France le 2 Decembre 1778, RA, Gallica vol. 558. See also A. Söderhjelm, *op. cit.*, p. 43; R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 211; S. Askenazy, *op. cit.*, pp. 221–222, 226, 230–231; J. Feldman, *op. cit.*, pp. 38–42, 44–45, 64–67; E. Rostworowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 695–696; O. Jägerskiöld, *Den svenska...*, pp. 279–280.

of the Court of pleasures that such a great spa offered to all those who had time to derive pleasure from rest. "But for such a poor man like me", the secretary added, "always busy, always on duty, all places are equally entertaining and whether I am with His Majesty in Spa or Granna, it is of no difference to me because all the time I am facing the temptations of my room where I live locked up alone with my inkwell and ciphers". It should be emphasised that Franc's dedication was a waste of time. Vergennes did not change his mind and was strongly dissuading Gustav III from starting a new war in the North⁷¹.

France's reluctance to take part in Gustav III's plans resulted from the fact that for more than two years the court of Versailles had been at the state of war with England and had neither the desire nor the opportunity to engage in the implementation of its ally's plans. Meanwhile, the Stockholm court was observing with growing interest developments on the American continent. In April 1779 Spain stood out against Great Britain which was forced to disperse its naval forces. British domination on seas and oceans, English ships' attempt to block American ports and England's systematic violation of free trade principles made neutral countries oppose as well. In September 1778 the Danish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Andreas Peter von Bernstorff, came up with a plan of a joint action of the Baltic states in order to defend the principle of free trade. Gustav III almost immediately followed up that idea and presented a project of his fleet's cooperation with Danish and Russian forces. From Catherine II's point of view, projects of Scandinavian mansions were exaggerated. Russia was determined to defend the access to its coasts only as it believed that a joint military action with France's ally, Sweden, could excessively deteriorate Anglo-Russian relations. Thus, the St. Petersburg court issued a verbal note to the British ministry which was presented by the Russian envoy to London in December 1778. In February 1779 Catherine II definitely refused to sign a formal maritime convention with other two Baltic states. At the same time the Russian diplomacy decided to intermediate in an agreement between the St. James court and the court of Versailles. Yet, both sides firmly rejected the Russian *bona officia*. England in December 1778 and France in May the following year. Thus, in 1779 each of the Baltic states tried to ensure safety of its merchant ships on its own. Sweden, like Denmark and Russia, was sending armed convoys to the Mediterranean Sea. Those steps, however, did not bring about the expected results and ships of the Baltic states still were being attacked by British warships.

⁷¹ See H.A. Barton, *Scandinavia...*, p. 114; Ch. de Vergennes to Gustav III, Versailles, October 3, 1779, in: *Recueil des documens* (Manderström), pp. 136–138; C.T. Odhner, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 27 and fol.; A. Geffroy, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 4; H.A. Barton, *Gustav III...*, p. 19; U.G. Franc to F. Sparre, Spa, August 7, 1780 as cited in A. Forssell, *op. cit.*, p. 307. See also A. Body, *Gustave III, roi de Suède aux eaux de Spa*, Brussels 1879; H. Stålhane, *Gustaf III:s resa till Spa 1780*, Stockholm 1939.

In that situation the St. Petersburg court decided to rethink the concept of cooperation with Denmark and Sweden. On February 28/March 10, 1780 Catherine II announced the “Declaration on an Armed Neutrality” that was developed by Nikita Panin on the basis of Bernstorff’s previous proposals. Under its provisions neutral states gained the right to navigate and trade on territorial waters of fighting countries, transport of weapons, ammunition and troops excluded, as well as to access all ports except those that were war zones. Any violation of the rules of an armed neutrality was to be regarded as an enemy step. That declaration was the first step taken on the way to a league of neutral countries that was later known as the League of Armed Neutrality. As to create it, however, Catherine II had to break the resistance of the Copenhagen court. From the very beginning Denmark was trying to eliminate Sweden from that agreement. Yet, thanks to Russia’s decisiveness, an agreement between Scandinavian mansions was made. On June 28/July 9, 1780 the Danish-Russian convention was signed. It was the beginning of the whole system of international agreements on the principles of free trade and navigation. The similar Swedish-Russian convention was signed on July 21/August 1, 1780 by Johan Fredrik von Nolcken, Nikita Panin and Ivan Ostermann. Finally, on December 24 a triple alliance was signed in St. Petersburg and at the same time a declaration on free trade in the Baltic Sea as well as its closure for warships of fighting countries was accepted. Six paragraphs of a so called “Acte Separé” regulated the question of the combined action of Russian, Danish and Swedish squadrons in order to ensure peace and safety of navigation in the Baltic Sea. Soon Holland joined the League of Armed Neutrality (from December 1780 it was in a state of war with England) as well as Prussia, Austria, Portugal and the Kingdom of Naples and Sicily (between 1781 and 1782). France, Spain and the United States were acting according to provisions of the “Declaration on an Armed Neutrality” as well. An armed neutrality proved to disturb England which found itself in a total political isolation. Its claims to control the global trade were rejected. Needless to say, the creation of the League of Armed Neutrality was very beneficial to the rebellious English colonists. This was so since neutral ships were supplying them with raw materials needed to wage war⁷².

⁷² See C.T. Odhner, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 71 and fol., 83–96; O. Jägerskiöld, *Den svenska...*, p. 280; H.A. Barton, *Scandinavia...*, p. 117; B. Hennings, *Gustav III...*, p. 251; I. de Madariaga, *op. cit.*, pp. 382–383. See also eadem, *Britain, Russia and the Armed Neutrality*, Yale–London 1963; *The Armed Neutralities of 1780 and 1800*, J. Brown Scott (ed.), London–New York 1918, pp. 295 and fol., 307, 311, 321–322; *Convention maritime pour le maintien de la liberté du commerce et de la navigation neutre. St. Petersbourg le 21 juillet/1 août 1780*, in: *Recueil des Traités, Conventions et autres Actes Diplomatiques de la Suède, entièrement ou partiellement en vigueur le 1 Janvier 1910* [further on: *Recueil des Traités*], C. Sandgren (ed.), Stockholm 1910, pp. 1–4 (a short version). Full versions of all treaties and declarations signed in 1780 by Russia, Denmark and

Gustav III had mixed feelings as regards the American War of Independence. On the one hand, it opened prospects for a significant recovery in the Swedish economy. Johan Liljencrantz was convinced that the American trade could bring significant benefits to Sweden. To encourage merchants and ship owners to visit America and islands of the West Indies the Stockholm ministry issued in 1782 a regulation that was granting tariff concessions to all those who would trade with America. All goods imported from the West Indies on Swedish ships were released from an obligatory staple right, too. The government's actions brought about intended results and led to a significant increase in the Swedish trade with the New World. Especially free port in Marstrand played a great role in the Swedish-American trade. The American war was also a significant military experience for many Swedish officers and soldiers. It is estimated that at that time more than 100 Swedes and Finns served in French units sent by Louis XVI to help the Americans. Moreover, 116 Swedish officers served in the Dutch army and at least 30 took part in the hostilities serving in the mainland fleet or on ships of American privateers. It was obvious that in his future wars Gustav III intended to make use of the military experience acquired by his subjects. On the other hand, though, Gustav III could not accept an American rebellion against the legitimate authority. From the beginning he was also very sceptical of American rebels. He did not like their rules. He was also anxious about prevailing democratic relations in the American society. He stiffly received the decision of the court of Versailles to make an agreement with the United States and start war with England. He unequivocally condemned the decision of Charles de Vergennes and Louis XVI in his letter to the Swedish Ambassador to Paris, Gustav Philip Creutz, dated August 19, 1778. The king wrote in it "I cannot accept it that it is a good thing to support rebels against their king. This example will have too many followers in an age where there is a fashion to overthrow all the sanctity and authority". In December 1782 he wrote to Creutz again and referred to the end of the American war: "This is a matter of kings. I have always believed so. It may be a prejudice on my part which stems from my own post and position. But perhaps it is a consequence of tense relations which from the very beginning of my reign I have had with my subjects, the impression of which is difficult to erase from my mind". With all his aversion to rebellion and revolution, Gustav III was also a complete legalist. He informed his Ambassador to Paris that he would never recognise the independence of the United States unless the English king release the Americans from the oath of allegiance. He also forbade two Swedish outstanding officers, Curt von Stedingk and Hans Axel

von Fersen, who had been fighting in the French army in the American War of Independence, to accept the American Cincinnati Order. Paradoxically, Gustav III's concerns on a negative impact of rebellious Americans' views on George III proved to be partly justified. Many Swedes that had participated in the American war belonged, in fact, to the future aristocratic opposition against Gustav III. Among them there were three brothers Järta, Adolf Ludvig Ribbing and Göran Magnus Sprengtporten. Yet, the resistance of the ruler of Sweden was broken when preliminaries to peace treaties between Britain, France and Spain were signed in Paris in February 1783. The Stockholm court realised that Swedish merchants would have no more opportunities to trade with America as soon as the war ended. Thus, it took up efforts to sign a commercial treaty with the newly created country, the United States of America. On April 3, 1783 Gustav Philip Creutz and Benjamin Franklin signed in Paris the Swedish-American treaty of friendship and trade which was to last for 15 years. Both parties were to respect the rules of free trade and navigation as well as follow the most favoured nation clause as regards merchants of an ally. Creutz was reported to have said that Sweden should be remembered as the first country that, without being asked by the Americans to do so, had offered its friendship to the new republic. The Stockholm court was, in fact, the first mansion among neutral countries which had not been involved in the American war, that recognised the independence of the United States⁷³.

Yet, the American war and problems of the United States were not able to attract Gustav III's attention for a longer time. This was so since Europe had to face up a new political crisis. After the peace treaty in Cieszyn and the convention in Ainali Kawak had been signed, the Prussian-Russian relations further deteriorated. The situation at the St. Petersburg court significantly changed as the position of Nikita Panin, who had always been supporting the idea to maintain friendship with Frederick II, was undermined by a new favourite of Catherine II, Grigory A. Potemkin, who was collaborating with Alexander A. Bezborodko. The latter wrote in 1776 a memorandum about the necessity of joining Crimea to Russia. Later on he reminded the case of the Kingdom of Dacia. Both, Potemkin and Bezborodko perfectly knew that an old alliance with Prussia would hinder their plans to unrest the East. Therefore, they opted for Russia's rapprochement to the Vienna

⁷³ See G. Majewska, *op. cit.*, pp. 67–69; H.A. Barton, *Sweden and the War of American Independence*, "William & Mary Quarterly", Ser. 3, vol. XXIII, 1966, pp. 412–427; *idem*, *Scandinavia...*, pp. 107–108, 114–115, 121–122; *idem*, *Gustav III...*, p. 18; C.T. Odhner, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 103 and fol.; B. v. Beskow, *Gustaf III såsom konung och menniskor*, vol. III, Stockholm after 1860, pp. 131, 160–161; O. Jägerskiöld, *Den svenska...*, p. 285; R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 210, 254; *Etats-Unis d'Amerique. Traité d'amitié et de commerce. Paris le 3 avril 1783*, in: *Recueil des Traités*, pp. 698–706.

court. Catherine II was also increasingly inclined to an alliance with Austria. In that situation the old ruler of Austria was a sole obstacle of the Russian-Austrian alliance. Yet, after 40 years of reign, Marie Therese died in Vienna in November 1780. When Joseph II's mother died he started to prepare plans of an expansion in the East and an alliance with the St. Petersburg court. He easily obtained an old Chancellor's, Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz, approval of his plans. In the spring of 1781 the emperor visited Russia. He met with Catherine II in Mogilev. Then, accompanied by the ruler of Russia, he visited Moscow and St. Petersburg where he spent three weeks until mid-July. First talks about the division of Turkey were carried out at that time. The meeting also resulted in signing the Russian-Austrian alliance treaty on May 18, 1781. At the request of Joseph II both rulers made similar statements on fundamental problems of the European policy. The partition of Poland from 1772 and a peace treaty of 1779 that had been concluded in Cieszyn were confirmed. Military reinforcements of 12 thousand soldiers were promised to each other if any aggression of the third party was to take place in the future. If Sweden was to attack Russia, Austria was to support an ally with yearly subsidies of 400 thousand roubles instead of sending its army with help. The St. Petersburg court was to do the same if the Austrian Belgium was attacked by a foreign country. Moreover, imperial letters from May 18, 1781 guaranteed the government and borders of the Republic of Poland as well as all existing Russian-Turkish agreements. Yet, in the second part of the joint declaration of both rulers it was stated that should Turkey invade Russia, Austria would start war with the sultan with an army as big as that of the St. Petersburg court. Russia was to act in a similar way in the event of the Turkish aggression on Austria. Although an agreement of both courts was kept in secret, closer relations between courts of Catherine II and Joseph II had been noticed. The Russian-Austrian alliance made on May 1781 was a final blow for Panin's North system which ceased to exist then. In the same month the creator of the North system, Nikita Panin, was sent on an indefinite leave and Alexander Bezborodko, greatly influenced by Grigory Potemkin, took his place alongside Catherine II.

Panin's demission and alliance treaty with Austria began a new era in the Russian foreign policy. Poland had been fully controlled by the St. Petersburg court for a long time. Denmark was the latter's loyal and faithful ally. Thus, Gustav III's position could be Catherine II's sole problem. The King of Sweden, however, could have acted against Russia only if he had been encouraged and subsidised by France. Thus, Joseph II's task was to convince the court of Versailles to refrain from offering new subsidies to the Swedes. Yet, Catherine II's old ally, the King of Prussia, appeared to hinder the implementation of her Eastern plans most. The St. Petersburg court assumed, however,

that Frederick II was too old to start any military action without a support of France or Great Britain. Those two, in turn, were fighting for their colonies and it seemed that the conflict would not end soon. Yet, Austria was to use its influences at Versailles and Russia was to try the same method in London as to dissuade France and England from supporting the Berlin court. Russia and Austria were so strong together that they could successfully counter a possible Prussian military action. Everything seemed to favour the implementation of Potemkin and Bezborodko's plans. On September 21, 1782, in a famous letter to Joseph II, Catherine II presented him her so called Greek plan. It was nothing more but a project of a division of Turkey. According to Catherine, Moldavia, Wallachia and Bessarabia were to create a buffer state, Dacia. An old Greek empire was to be restored under a leadership of Catherine II's grandson, Grand Duke Konstantin. Russia would receive Ochakov, lands between the Boh and the Dniester as well as Crimea and several islands in the Aegean Sea, whereas Austria would obtain other Balkan lands inhabited by the Slavs. Konstantin was to make an oath that there would be no personal union between Russia and the Greek Kingdom in question. Joseph responded to the Russian proposal and demanded Khotyn, Orsova, Vidin, Belgrade, Istria and Dalmatia. He also made a cardinal condition to invite France to the realisation of the plan. Through his Ambassador to Versailles, François Claude, Count of Mercy-Argenteau, he offered Vergennes Egypt. Yet, co-workers of the emperor did not share the latter's enthusiasm. Especially Chancellor Kaunitz, the emperor's brother, the Grand Duke of Tuscany, Leopold, and the Ambassador of the Vienna court to France were concerned about Catherine's letter. The latter two expressed their concerns in letters to the emperor dated at the end of December 1782. Mercy-Argenteau warned that Russia in Constantinople would destruct Austria and Europe. Nevertheless, only Vergennes' position damped Joseph II. At the end of 1782, after having learnt about Catherine's intentions towards the East, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs started peace negotiations with England. The French intervention in defence of the integrity of the Ottoman Empire became quite real then. Meanwhile, Russia continued its eastern policy. On April 8 (19), 1783 the tsarina issued a manifesto on "The Inclusion of the Crimean Peninsula, the Island of Tamani and the Entire Kuban Oblast to the Russian State". Russian troops concentrated on the southern border of the country had no problems with the execution of orders. Crimea was occupied without any resistance. The sultan's reaction on Russia's clear violation of the convention of Ainali Kawak could not have been predicted, though. Everything seemed to indicate that a new Russo-Turkish war would break out⁷⁴.

⁷⁴ See S. Askenazy, *op. cit.*, pp. 231–242; 245–246, 436; *Historia dyplomacji*, vol. I (*do 1871 r.*), W.M. Chwostow et al. (ed.), 2nd ed., Warszawa 1973, pp. 365, 370; I. de Madariaga, *Russia...*, pp. 387–388; eadem, *The Secret Austro-Russian Treaty of 1781*, "Slavonic and East

When the Crimean crisis was at its peak the Ambassador of France to the Swedish capital was unexpectedly changed. On January 20, 1783 Pierre, Count of Usson, died in Stockholm. In February 1783 Louis Marc, Marquis of Pons, the former Minister Plenipotentiary of France in Berlin, was appointed a new Ambassador of Louis XVI to Stockholm. On June 4, 1783 Charles de Vergennes prepared for him a new ministerial instruction. He recalled in it a traditional Swedish-French friendship as well as Gustav III's friendship with Louis XVI. Therefore, the ambassador was to maintain good relations between two courts. As for more specific issues the Minister of Foreign Affairs told the marquis to comply with an old manual that had been prepared for his predecessor in 1774. Yet, he drew new ambassador's attention to the fact that Gustav III, following the advice of Louis XVI, had been maintaining good relations with Catherine II from some time. Thus, the marquis was to make every effort to maintain current relations between Sweden and the Russian court. It was supposed to be one of the most important goals of his mission. On the other hand, Vergennes warned his envoy that he should prevent Stockholm from being influenced by the St. Petersburg court. That part of the manual in which Vergennes was referring to the current situation in the international arena was especially interesting. He wrote there that although a new Russian-Turkish war seemed to break out, France did not want Gustav III to take Turkey's side. Already in 1768 Louis XV prevented the Turks from sending a request for help to Stockholm. If the Turks requested to help them now, Pons was to convince Gustav III of the groundlessness of such a demand. Later on, Vergennes stated that although relations of the Stockholm court with England were bad because of Sweden's participation in the League of Armed Neutrality, he did not see any threat to Gustav III's interests there. In his opinion, nothing should disturb the North, especially as the Danish-Swedish relations had recently improved. The Marquis of Pons was strictly ordered to maintain such a state of affairs. He was also to defuse any tensions between Stockholm and Copenhagen that might appear in the future. The new envoy of Versailles was also entrusted with an important task to persuade Gustav III to reduce spending and economically dispose of his funds. Above all, however, he was to ensure that Gustav III would continue his peaceful foreign policy and would not try to entangle Sweden in a new conflict. Finally, Vergennes reminded the marquis that near finalisation of peace negotiations with England would help him to establish friendly relations with the English envoy to the Swedish capital.

European Review", vol. XXXVIII, No. 90, pp. 114–145; W.A. Serczyk, *Katarzyna II carowa Rosji*, Wrocław 1974, pp. 217, 220, 223–224; J. Michalski, *Dyplomacja polska w latach 1764–1795*, in: *Historia dyplomacji polskiej*, vol. II (1572–1795), Z. Wójcik (ed.), Warszawa 1982, p. 571; E. Rostworowski, *op. cit.*, p. 697.

Like his predecessor, also Pons was ordered to regularly correspond with French envoys to St. Petersburg, Vienna and Constantinople. Yet, a new representative of France who arrived to Stockholm on July 24, 1783 was to face an extremely difficult task. This was so since Gustav III decided to change his foreign policy in a way that was far from advice, guidance and wishful thinking of the court of Versailles⁷⁵.

The Turkish-Russian crisis that had been increasing since the beginning of 1783 was a great opportunity for Gustav III to carry out his old plan of conquering Norway. Thus, once again, he tried to break the Russian-Danish alliance. He decided that another meeting with the ruler of Russia would be the best way to achieve that goal. The king was accompanied in his Russian expedition by a new *kanslipresident*, Gustav Philip Creutz, who had recently replaced the well-known supporter of a peaceful foreign policy, Ulrik Scheffer. Gustav III met with Catherine II on June 27, 1783 in Hamina. Both rulers spent three days together but, like six years before in St. Petersburg, the meeting brought the King of Sweden no results. The empress remained indifferent towards arguments presented by him and categorically refused to give her consent to the Swedish attack on Denmark. Yet, Gustav III did not worry about the tsarina's attitude as he hoped that the outbreak of war with Turkey would make it impossible for her to help the Copenhagen court. Thus, after his return to Sweden, in July and August 1783 the king was eagerly awaiting the news on an outbreak of the Turkish war. In fact, the Swedish envoy to Istanbul, Gerhard Johan von Heidenstam, was ordered to persuade the Porte to attack Russia. At the same time Sweden was preparing itself for a war with Denmark. Only four people from Gustav III's retinue were informed about his plans of invading Copenhagen and conquering Norway: Gustav Philip Creutz, Henrik af Trolle, Johan Christopher Toll and the new Secretary of State in the Ministry of War, Johan Gustaf von Carlsson. As constitutionally the king could not start an offensive war without the *Riksdag's* consent Gustav III wanted to provoke the Danes. The Swedish army and navy were put on red alert again. The king demanded from Liljencrantz 550 thousand *riksdalers* for additional reinforcements. Yet, an old minister could give him immediately only 35 thousand and asked him to wait for the loans he expected to obtain within next few months as to get the rest of the sum. In that situation, in the autumn of 1783, Gustav III decided to postpone a military operation against Denmark for the next year. At the same time, to divert Catherine II's attention from his hostile actions against the Copenhagen court, the king ordered Johan Fredrik von Nolcken to start

⁷⁵ See *Mémoire pour servir d'instruction au sieur marquis de Pons, allant en Suède en qualité d'ambassadeur de Sa Majesté auprès du roi de Suède, 4 Juin 1783*, in: *Recueil des instructions*, pp. 466–471.

in St. Petersburg secret negotiations on a treaty alliance with Russia. Yet, advisers of the empress pretty quickly realised true intentions of the Swedish diplomacy and the negotiations had failed⁷⁶.

SEARCHING A NEW ALLY. GUSTAV III'S FOREIGN TRIP IN THE YEARS 1783 AND 1784

While preparing to attack Denmark, Gustav III was not passively waiting for further developments. First talks with the Marquis of Pons convinced him that he could not count on France's support for his plans. Thus, he decided to set off on another trip abroad. Officially, he was to go to bathing in Pisa for health reasons. It was just an excuse, though. In fact, the king intended to win new allies against Denmark during that trip. At the end of September 1783 Gustav III left Stockholm as Count of Haga. He was accompanied by a carefully selected attendants: a great poet and orator, Gudmund Jöran Adlerbeth, a prominent sculptor, Tobias Sergel, the Secretary of the Presidential Office, Ulric Gustaf Franc, a favourite page, Charles Peyron, Evert Taube and Hans Henrik von Essen, Hans Axel von Fersen as well as Gustaf Mauritz Armfelt. Count of Haga arrived to Italy in late October 1783. On November 2 he was already in Pisa. There, he met for the first time with Count Falkenstein, that is Emperor Joseph II travelling *incognito*, too. Then, at the end of November, he moved to Florence. He met with the emperor for the second time in that city. He also met the latter's younger brother, the Grand Duke of Tuscany, Leopold. In Florence the King of Sweden also met with the last descendants of the Stuart family, Charles Edward, Count of Albany and Cardinal York. On Christmas Eve, December 24, 1783, Gustav III arrived with his attendants to Rome. It was the first visit of the Protestant ruler of the North in the Eternal City in the history of Europe. It sparked a huge interest and was commented by numerous contemporary observers. On December 25 Count of Haga met again with Count Falkenstein who was also staying at Rome then. Together with the emperor he participated in a mass served in the Basilica of St. Peter. The next day the king and his companions were received by Pope Pius VI. On that occasion, all were dressed in Swedish national costumes. On

⁷⁶ See C.T. Odhner, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 235 and fol., 242 and fol., 245 and fol., 254 and fol., 265–267; idem, *Gustaf III och Katarina II åren 1783–1784*, Stockholm 1879; idem, *Gustaf III och Katarina II efter freden i Värälä*, Stockholm 1895, pp. 7–8; E. Tegnér, *op. cit.*, pp. 67–77; R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 255–259; L. Stavenow, *Den gustavianska...*, pp. 70–75; B. Hennings, *Gustav III...*, p. 254; A. Söderhjelm, *op. cit.*, p. 45; H.A. Barton, *Scandinavia...*, p. 133; idem, *Russia and the Problem of Sweden-Finland 1721–1809*, "East European Quarterly", vol. V, No. 4, January 1972, p. 447; S. Oakley, *Gustavus III:s Plan for War with Denmark, 1783–84*, in: *Studies in Diplomatic History*, R. Hatton, M.S. Anderson (eds), London 1970, pp. 168–186; Z. Anusik, *Racja stanu, czy inne racje? Polityka zagraniczna Szwecji w latach 1697–1792*, in: *Spory o państwo w dobie nowożytnej. Między racją stanu a partykularyzmem*, Z. Anusik (ed.), Łódź 2007, pp. 397–398.

January 1, 1784 the pope met with Gustav for the second time and had a long conversation with him in the Vatican Library. Yet, talks with the emperor and Pius VI did not bring about the results that could satisfy Gustav III. Neither the first nor the second of his interlocutors was interested in political developments in the North. All their attention was concentrated on the Crimean crisis in which, in turn, the ruler of Sweden could not and did not want to participate. It also seems that the emperor had not taken the Swedish king seriously as he regarded him as a man without character, a fanfaron and an effeminate dandy. In January 1784 Count of Haga left the Eternal City for Naples where he participated in an endless carnival.

Still, Gustav III did not spend whole his time on carnival games and festivals. The king was closely observing developments in the international arena. During his trip he was receiving volumes of ministerial correspondence and Ulric Gustaf Franc was writing hundreds of letters from the ruler of Sweden to various recipients. In Naples in March 1784 Gustav III heard of an agreement between Turkey and Russia. Thus, his hopes for an outbreak of a big conflict in the East were to be abandoned. Disappointed and discouraged the king returned to Rome and stayed there for the next few weeks. Yet, he soon recovered from an initial apathy and depression. After some hesitation he decided to send a confidential letter to the empress and reveal to her that he intended to attack Denmark. In the letter, once again he tried to convince his powerful cousin to leave the Copenhagen court to its own fate. Despite his two failures, from which he had suffered before, Gustav III still seemed to believe in the possibility of breaking Catherine II's alliance with Denmark and replacing it with the Swedish-Russian one. While waiting for an answer from St. Petersburg, Count of Haga left Rome for Parma and then Venice where he arrived on May 3, 1784. There, he received a letter from Catherine II. The tsarina tried to dissuade him from any hostilities towards Denmark and she warned him that Russian troops would invade Finland if he did not give up that idea. Almost at the same time the king received a message on the Copenhagen coup of April 14, 1784 that resulted in restoring power of a declared enemy of Sweden, Andreas Peter von Bernstorff. At the latter's command Danish forces were put on alert immediately. Thus, Gustav III had to abandon the dream of an easy conquest of Norway. Moreover, the security of his own country seemed to be seriously threatened. Count of Haga made, therefore, the only decision he could make in that situation. He decided to renew his old relations with the court of Versailles, ignoring the fact that it was France's perseverance during the Crimean crisis that made him abandon all his ambitious plans and beautiful hopes⁷⁷.

⁷⁷ See C.T. Odhner, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 271–291 and fol.; A. Geffroy, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 6–17; R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 259–260, 264–272; L. Stavenow, *Den gustavianska...*, pp. 121–130; A. Söderhjelm, *op. cit.*, pp. 45–46; eadem, *Fersen et Marie-Antoinette. Journal intime et*

When Russia started to occupy Crimea in April 1783 Charles de Vergennes undertook energetic diplomatic steps in order to save endangered Turkey. He was even thinking about a creation of a broad coalition of European countries, France, Spain, Sardinia, Prussia, Sweden, and perhaps even Poland among them, the task of which was to stop the expansion of imperial courts and prevent an expected partition of the Ottoman state. France was more independent as regards the Turkish case as on September 3, 1783 it had signed at Versailles a treaty with England. From the beginning, Vergennes tried to make an impression that France was willing to sacrifice “the last penny and the last soldier” in the Porte’s defence. In reality, however, he very quickly realised that he would not be able to help Turkey in any way. Therefore, he decided that the best way out of the situation would be if the Turks gave Crimea and Kuban to Russia. Thus, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, through his Ambassador to Istanbul, Saint-Priest, started to urge the Porte to legitimise recent Russian annexations. Finally, thanks to the mediation of the French diplomacy, on January 8, 1784 Turkey signed the second convention in Ainali Kawak under which it agreed on Russia taking Crimea, Kuban and other disputed territories. Thus, a danger of the outbreak of the Russo-Turkish war was averted. Yet, Charles de Vergennes’ policy made it possible for Russia to gain the better access to the Black Sea. The balance of power in that part of Europe had been disrupted. Nevertheless, Vergennes could be satisfied with the results he had achieved. The convention of Ainali Kawak did not mention claims of the Viennese court. But when cheated Joseph II began to claim from Versailles Moldavia and Wallachia as partly compensation for his losses, Vergennes firmly rejected his demands. Although the French minister was willing to turn a blind eye to a growing Russian influence on the Black Sea, he was strongly opposing Austria’s imperialist claims as he regarded the latter country a hidden enemy rather than an ally. Austria, disappointed in its hopes of acquiring Turkish territories,

correspondance du comte Axel de Fersen, Paris 1930, p. 94; H.A. Barton, *Gustav III...*, p. 20; E. Tegnér, *op. cit.*, pp. 93–136. The emperor’s opinion on Gustav III was given in a letter to his brother, Leopold: “L’apparition du roi de Suède, sa façon de se présenter annoncent son orgueil insupportable; c’est une homme sans caractère, faux et qui, avec une vernis d’esprit et de connoissances, n’est qu’un fanfaron et petit-maître manqué”. See Joseph II to Leopold, Grand Duke of Tuscany, Pisa, November 13, 1783, *Joseph II und Leopold von Toscana. Ihr Briefwechsel von 1781 bis 1790*, A. v. Arneth (ed.), vol. I, Vienna 1872, p. 179. See also E. Tegnér, *op. cit.*, p. 96; H. Schück, *Gustaf III. En karaktärstudie*, Stockholm 1904, p. 15; H.A. Barton, *Gustav III...*, p. 23; J.P. Findeisen, „Królewski rewolucjonista”. *Król Gustaw III u progu kapitalistycznej przebudowy szwedzkiego systemu feudalnego (1771–1792)*, “Zapiski Historyczne”, vol. LXII, 1997, issue 2–3, p. 80. As for the Copenhagen events see W. Czapliński, *Dzieje Danii nowożytnej 1500–1975*, Warszawa 1982, p. 126. More about Gustav III’s visit to Italy see G.J. Adlerbeth, *Gustaf III:s resa till Italien*, H. Schück (ed.), Stockholm 1902; M. Olausson, *Gustav III:s resa till Italien (1783–1784)*, “Uppsala Universitetsbiblioteks Utställningskataloger”, No. 14, Uppsala 1984.

tried to obtain a consent for the seizure of Venice. Yet, strong opposition on the part of Catherine II damaged that opportunity as well. Russia obtained important territorial acquisitions thanks to the Crimean crisis. Vergennes came to prominence as a saviour and pacifier of Turkey and Europe. Only Joseph II came out of it with empty hands. On that occasion, Austrian tightened its relations with Prussia and Turkey and its relations with France had greatly deteriorated. The Franco-Austrian alliance was slowly becoming a chimera of the past⁷⁸.

In those circumstances Gustav III decided to visit the court of Versailles. On May 15, 1784 he left Venice and travelling through Padua, Verona, Bergamo and Milan he arrived to Turin. In Verona the royal attendants split up. Most of them returned directly to Sweden. The king was to be accompanied on his way to Paris by the most trusted advisers: Franc, Armfelt, Taube, Peyron and Fersen. Gustav III met with King of Sardinia, Victor Amadeus III, in Turin, and after a short rest, on May 25, he left the capital of Piedmont for Genoa, Toulon, Marseille, Aix en Provence, Lyon and finally Paris. On June 7, 1784 royal attendants arrived to the French capital. They were enthusiastically received there. Gustav was very satisfied. He wrote that Paris was as his own home to him. The French court organised many festivities in his honour. A mutual sympathy of Gustav III and Marie Antoinette was quickly revealed. An excellent mood of the Swedish king was, however, quickly disturbed. On June 25 Gustav's favourite page, Charles Peyron, was killed in a duel. During his stay in Paris and Versailles Gustav III also revealed his reluctance towards enlightened philosophers. While shining at court the king was deliberately avoiding meetings with their representatives. He blamed them for the demoralisation of people and desire to overthrow the existing social order. He accused them of a desire to dominate as well as an extreme intolerance and did not like them because they were meddling in everything. Yet, while avoiding other enlightened minds, Gustav III met with an outstanding French writer, Pierre Augustin de Beaumarchais, whom he had long admired and appreciated. Also from the political point of view the royal visit to Paris was extremely successful. Both, France and Sweden wanted to further strengthen their bilateral relations. Vergennes, faced with spreading Russian influence on the Black Sea, tried to cooperate closer with Sweden and stop the Russian expansion on the North. Gustav III was even more interested in an alliance with France. Only the court of Versailles' support could protect his country against an expected invasion of the Danes and Russians.

⁷⁸ See J. Feldman, *op. cit.*, pp. 82–90; S. Askenazy, *op. cit.*, pp. 247–252, 437; R.H. Lord, *Drugi rozbiór Polski*, Warszawa 1973, p. 47; W. Kalinka, *Sejm Czteroletni*, 5th ed., vol. I, part 1, Kraków 1895, p. 3, 12; W.A. Serczyk, *op. cit.*, p. 216.

In that situation, negotiations were quickly finalised and on July 1 and 19, 1784 two secret Swedish-French conventions were signed. Under the first one, signed by Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein and Charles de Vergennes, Sweden, in exchange for trade privileges for French merchants, received the Saint-Barthélemy island in Dutch West Indies that had belonged to France since 1648. In the event of an attack from Denmark or Russia the support for the Stockholm court was also promised. Yet, a secret convention on friendship and subsidies signed by Gustav III and Louis XVI at Versailles on July 19 was much more important for the Swedish king. Under that agreement both kings guaranteed each other the inviolability of all their possessions in Europe. They promised a mutual assistance in case of war, too. If France was attacked, within three months from the date of the first request for help the King of Sweden was to send a squadron consisting of eight battleships and four frigates. If hostile actions were to be directed against Sweden, the French king was to support an ally with twelve squadrons of ships of the line and six frigates as well as 12 thousand infantrymen. Paragraph 9 of the treaty stated that, if objective obstacles prevented the King of France from sending his reinforcements to Sweden, or if the King of Sweden preferred to receive help in money, France would provide him with a cash equivalent paid each month in the amount of 24 thousand *livres* per one thousand of infantrymen and in the amount agreed upon by both parties for each ship and frigate. Louis XVI also made a commitment to pay the Stockholm court, regardless of the annual subsidy that he owed Sweden under the treaty signed by Gustav Philip Creutz before his departure from Paris in 1783, extraordinary subsidies of six million *livres*. They were to be paid from July 1, 1784 in monthly instalments of 100 thousand *livres*. Both rulers promised not to sign any treaty which would be contradictory to the convention in question as well as to inform each other about everything that could affect their peace and security. The treaty signed on July 19, 1784 was to stay in force for five years, starting from July 1, and three months before its expiration date both parties could agree on its extension. Thus, it should not be surprising that Gustav III was leaving France as a true winner. Charles de Vergennes must have had every reason to be satisfied as well. According to historians, the treaty of Versailles of September 3, 1783 that was confirming the independence of the United States as well as an alliance with Sweden of July 19, 1784 were the last triumphant acts of the French policy in the pre-revolutionary era⁷⁹.

⁷⁹ For Gustav III's stay in France see A. Geffroy, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 25–41, 46; H. Stålhane, *Gustaf III:s resa till Italien och Frankrike*, Stockholm 1953; C.T. Odhner, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 320 and fol.; R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 273–276; E. Tegnér, *op. cit.*, pp. 138–150; A. Söderhjelm, *Fersen...*, pp. 99–101; H.A. Barton, *Gustav III...*, pp. 21–22. The takeover of the Saint-Barthélemy island marked the culmination of old aspirations and efforts of Gustav III. Even during peace negotiations at Versailles that were to end the American War of Independence, the king

AGAINST THE ST. PETERSBURG COURT: AN ANTI-RUSSIAN SWEDISH POLICY OF 1784-1786

Gustav III, encouraged by his successes at Versailles, after having returned to Sweden in August 1784 clearly intended to start an armed conflict. First of all, as always, he was considering the possibility of invading Denmark. Yet, he was also more inclined to attack Russia as his relations with the St. Petersburg court had further complicated. A new Russian Ambassador to Stockholm, Arkadiy Morkov, was ordered in December 1784 to re-establish a pro-Russian party in Sweden that could be used in the act of a restoration of an old Swedish constitution that had been overthrown in August 1772. Later, also the Danish envoy received similar instructions from his court. At the same time Gustav III was paying more attention to the situation in Holland where violent internal disturbances were taking place. They resulted from the fact that on the Dutch political scene there appeared a radical political movement inspired by works of French philosophers (mainly Jean Jacques Rousseau) that had followers among middle bourgeoisie, some dissident ministers and a huge part of the intelligence. The “democrats” fairly quickly established contacts with an oligarchic party of regents that was representing interests of the wealthy bourgeoisie and together, as the so-called patriotic party, they opposed a government of Stadtholder William V of Orange and accused him of having betrayed national interests (as a supporter of England) as well as, after the Republic’s lost war with Great Britain (fought between 1780 and 1783), of having inadequately prepared the fleet to war. As dominated by the opposition, Estates-General were further limiting the governor’s prerogatives, armed volunteer corps (*vrijkorps*) were being formed, patriotic clubs were being created and “commissioners of citizens”, who had a growing influence on old municipalities and provincial authorities, were being elected the situation in the country was difficult

tried to bargain Tobago for Sweden but with no result. The Saint-Barthélemy island obtained in 1784 had an area of approximately 21 km sq. and was inhabited by about 700 people. It was rocky, overgrown with bushes and had no drinking water or roads. Yet, it was a perfect place for a port. For more information on the Swedish reign on the island see S.M. Waller, *S:t Barthélemy 1785–1801. Yttre förhållen, handelspolitisk och statsfinansiell betydelse*, Historisk Arkiv 1, Stockholm 1954; O. Jägerskiöld, *Den svenska...*, pp. 271–272, 278–280; I. Hildebrand, *Den svenska kolonia S:t Barthélemy och Västindiska kompaniet fram till 1796*, Lund 1951. See also C.T. Odhner, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 492–493; *Den svenska historien*, vol. VII, p. 88; G. Majewska, *op. cit.*, p. 103; A. Geffroy, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 377. As regards Swedish-French treaties of July 1 and 19, 1784 see Pacte d’union entre S.M. le Roi de Suède et S.M. Très Chrétienne fait à Versailles le 19 Juillet 1784 (a copy), RA, Gallica vol. 558; *Fördrag mellan Sverige och Frankrike, afslutadt i Versailles den 19 Juli 1784*, in: *Historiska Handlingar*, vol. V, Stockholm 1866, pp. 151–154; A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige och...*, pp. 48–50; C.T. Odhner, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 330 and fol.; A. Geffroy, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 50. See also a Project of a ratification of the Paris convention of July 1, 1784, Drottningholm, August 1784, RA, Gallica vol. 555.

and it seemed that a civil war would break out. Moreover, there was a high risk that Austria would start an armed conflict with Holland as Joseph II, who during the American war had removed Dutch crews from the fortresses on the Belgian-French border, was requesting to unblock mouth of the Scheldt river and to withdraw restrictions imposed on Belgian merchants under provisions of old treaties ending the war of the Spanish Succession. Gustav III's interest in Dutch affairs was even more justified as the patriots led to signing a formal Franco-Dutch alliance on September 6, 1784. In that situation, in November 1784, the Swedish Ambassador to the Hague, Carl Gustaf Schultz, Baron von Ascheraden, started negotiations with the representatives of the Estates-General on a conclusion of an alliance between Sweden and the Republic of the United Provinces. Those negotiations aimed at providing the Dutch with the Swedish military support in the event of an aggression on the part of one of its neighbours. Gustav III, in return, was to receive from Holland subsidies which he intended to use to further expand his army and navy. As the Hague negotiations were prolonging and did not bring about the expected results, the king soon returned to the idea of provoking a war with Russia. Already at the beginning of 1785 the king was planning an anti-Russian uprising in the Baltic provinces. The uprising, supported at the right time by Swedish armed forces, was to pave him the way to obtain territorial acquisitions in Courland or Livonia⁸⁰.

Gustav III revealed his political plans in a letter to Louis XVI dated April 17, 1785. He was writing in it about an increasing internal opposition that was inspired by Russia. His enemies, jealous of Sweden's relations with France, attempted to break the Franco-Swedish alliance and make Sweden depend on Russia again. The St. Petersburg court wanted to make him sign a *pacte de famille*. If he did not agree on it, Catherine II would certainly make an offensive anti-Swedish alliance with England and Denmark. The situation was dangerous because the empress's position had been significantly strengthened after the conclusion of a treaty with Austria. Gustav III tried to convince the King of France that all actions of the St. Petersburg court made him fear an attack from Russia. Yet, Gustav III was not going to passively observe the imminent danger and confined himself to defensive actions. He informed Louis XVI that if he was attacked, he would make a landing

⁸⁰ See C.T. Odhner, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 347–348; 352–355, 366–367, 397; B. Hennings, *Gustav III...*, p. 256; H.A. Barton, *Scandinavia...*, p. 134; E. Rostworowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 870–871; J. Balicki, M. Bogucka, *Historia Holandii*, Wrocław 1976, pp. 258–260; W. Konopczyński, *Lars von Engeströms mission i Polen 1787–1791. Ett bidrag till historien om Gustav III:s polska politik*, "Historisk Tidskrift", vol. XLIV, Stockholm 1924, p. 2; Z. Anusik, *Racja stanu...*, p. 398; idem, *Dwór sztokholmski wobec wydarzeń w Holandii w latach 1785–1787*, in: *Gdańsk – Polska – Europa. Praca zbiorowa ofiarowana profesorowi doktorowi habilitowanemu Władysławowi Zajewskiemu w siedemdziesiątą rocznicę urodzin*, Z. Kropidłowski (ed.), Gdańsk 2001, pp. 89–90.

in Livonia where he expected to appear in the glory of the local people's liberator from the Russian yoke. He planned to burn Kronstadt, which had not been strengthened yet, and defeat its Russian squadron. Then, he intended to take St. Petersburg and dictate the Russians conditions of a future peace in a defeated capital. Thus, to carry out that great plan, he was preparing his fleet. His aim was, in fact, to nip the causes of the war in the bud. At the same time, Gustav III tried to convince the ruler of France that he wanted to keep peace with Russia and he started major reinforcements only as he feared an aggression on its part. In the same letter, the Swedish king wrote that Rheingraf Karl von Salm-Grumbach started talks with Holland. He concluded that the Dutch could back Emperor Joseph II, an ally of Russia, into a corner by threatening him with an attack on Belgium. He also stated that the Stockholm court intended to sign an alliance with the Republic of the United Provinces in the near future which could serve both, its own and France's interests. Gustav III wrote that should Holland be attacked by Austrian troops, he wanted to support it with six thousand soldiers and a squadron of his fleet. Yet, he expected the same support on the part of the Dutch, if Sweden was to face the Russian aggression. Finally, once again Gustav III accused Russia of provoking him to start a war. However, he predicted that an old age, infirmity and a sense of justice would restrain Catherine II from an attack on his country. Yet, as he did not know her successor's, Grand Duke Paul's, attitude, he had to be prepared for the worst. He concluded with a statement that although his two-year reinforcements had already brought about good results, he could not stop halfway. Thus, he intended to continue his actions as he expected that Dutch and French subsidies would help him to enlarge the Swedish army and navy. They would repair his state finances, too. Because the Dutch were asking him whether they could count on his troops, promising at the same time 12 ships of the line and six frigates in the event of an attack on Sweden, he could not ignore such a favourable offer. He was responsible for the fate of his people, family and future generations and because he knew that Louis XVI was friendly towards Sweden, he was sure that the latter one would fully approve of all his actions⁸¹.

Needless to say, such a letter had to surprise the court of Versailles. Charles de Vergennes made an alliance with Sweden mainly in order to protect it from the expected invasion of Danish and Russian troops. That goal had already been achieved. In that situation, France, exhausted after the American war and plunged in a deep internal crisis, was not going to be involved in a new armed conflict started by irresponsible actions of Gustav III. Thus, Vergennes harshly criticised ideas of the Swedish king.

⁸¹ See Gustav III to Louis XVI, Stockholm, April 17, 1785 (a concept), RA, Gallica vol. 555; Z. Anusik, *Dwór sztokholmski...*, pp. 90–91.

He advised an absolute necessity to maintain peace with Russia and resignation from an idea of making an agreement with Holland. Yet, an attitude of the French Minister of Foreign Affairs should not surprise the Stockholm court. Vergennes had been determined and consistent in his policy for years. Nevertheless, the answer of the court of Versailles was badly received in Stockholm. Also the Swedish Ambassador to Paris, Baron Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein, wrote about that failure: "Mr de Vergennes turns out to be extremely uncertain, indecisive or eager to maintain peace at any cost. Because of his nature he is only able to act under the pressure of events and he can do nothing to prevent them... I am convinced that Vergennes will not be made to undertake steps in advance as to thwart any projects. He will always wait for things to come up"⁸².

Still, the Swedish ambassador's opinion was certainly unfair. This was so since Charles de Vergennes had achieved another political success. Once again he was able to interfere in expansionist plans of the Vienna court. At the end of 1784 Joseph II came to an agreement with the Elector of Bavaria, Charles Theodore, as regards the exchange of Belgium for Bavaria. As to avoid any obstacles he wanted the transaction to be approved of by a rightful successor to the Electorate, Charles, Duke von Zweibrücken. Yet, because the Duke von Zweibrücken had remained in close relations with France for years, the cabinet of Versailles was to be involved in the whole case. Louis XVI's Council decided in January 1785 that such a change would make Austria too strong and thus, its eventual approval was to depend on the position of Prussia. Frederick II was not going to strengthen the position of his old rival and convened a congress of German princes in Berlin where in July the League of Princes was created (*Fürstenbund*). As at the very last moment Russia withdrew its support for Austria, thanks to a harmonious cooperation of Prussia and France, the German policy of the emperor was a total failure. Gustav III, sent away from Versailles with hands empty, once again attempted to break the Russian-Danish alliance. He also tried to find another ally against Russia. At the turn of 1785 and 1786 the Stockholm court decided to reproach Denmark and Prussia. Immediately after the *Riksdag* of 1786 Gustav III left for Marienlyst in Skåne to meet with the Danish royal family. Yet, neither the June trip to Denmark nor steps undertaken in Berlin brought any results. The Danes did not want to break an alliance with Russia and the King of Prussia, whose last months were poisoned by a fear of a further Austro-Russian rapprochement, was dying. Quite unexpectedly for Gustav III,

⁸² E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, June 30 and July 7, 1785, *Correspondance diplomatique du baron de Staël-Holstein ambassadeur de Suède en France et de son successeur comme chargé d'affaires le baron Brinkman. Documents inédits sur la révolution (1789–1799) recueillis aux Archives Royales de Suède*, L. Leouzou Le Duc (ed.), Paris 1881, pp. 18–19; J. Feldman, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

the death of Frederick II on August 17, 1786 opened before him and his advisers new political prospects. The St. Petersburg court, after having heard of the death of King of Prussia, decided to return to an old Greek plan. The emperor defeated in the Reich was also inclined to the idea of obtaining some territories at the expense of the Ottoman Empire. Gustav III, in turn, was counting on a new conflict in the East. Holland's increasing problems seemed to be favourable to him as well. On September 15, 1786 Stadtholder William V, harassed by the patriotic party and Estates-General, decided to leave the Hague and move to eastern provinces dominated by orangists. An imminent outbreak of a civil war in that country was widely expected. For the time being, however, Gustav III, who despite frantic attempts had not found a new ally ready to support his hostile intentions towards Russia, once again was forced to seek a rapprochement with the court of Versailles. He could not do it through the French embassy in Stockholm as on August 29, 1786 Ambassador Louis Marc de Pons returned home for holidays. During his absence, a *chargé d'affaires*, Chevalier Jean de Gaussen, who had been staying at the capital of Sweden since the end of 1784, was to represent French interests. As he was a relatively low-ranked diplomat, Gustav III was not willing to start any serious political talks with him. In that situation, Sweden's Ambassador to Paris, Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein, was entrusted with a task to restore good relations with the French ministry and carefully observe events on the local political scene⁸³.

⁸³ See E. Rostworowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 696–697; S. Askenazy, *op. cit.*, pp. 253–254, 257; C.T. Odhner, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 475; L. Stavenow, *Den gustavianska...*, pp. 144–149; E. Tegnér, *op. cit.*, pp. 180–182; J. Balicki, M. Bogucka, *op. cit.*, pp. 260–261; *Recueil des instructions*, p. 465; A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige...*, pp. 56–58; *Repertorium der diplomatischen Vertreter aller Länder*, vol. III (1764–1815), O.F. Winter (ed.), Graz–Köln 1965, p. 136; Z. Anusik, *Dwór sztokholmski...*, pp. 92–93.

CHAPTER TWO

IN THE FACE OF THE APPROACHING STORM: THE SWEDISH-FRENCH RELATIONS FROM JANUARY 1787 TO MAY 1789

THE AMBASSADOR

Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein was born on October 25, 1749 in Loddby, Östergötland county, as a son of Mattias Gustaf (1701–1757), a lieutenant in the Swedish army, and Elisabeth Ulfsparre af Broxvik (1717–1773). As he was early orphaned by his father, at age of 11 he volunteered to the Östgöta infantry regiment. In 1763 he was raised to the rank of sergeant, in 1768 became a sergeant major, and finally in 1772 attained the rank of a lieutenant. Since March 1773 he had served in the Södermanland regiment where he ended his active military service. Although in 1776 he was appointed a Chamberlain to Queen Sophia Magdalena, he did not intend to serve at court. His own ambition led him to quite different career prospects. His dreams came true in 1778 when he became a member of the Swedish embassy in Paris. From the very beginning of his stay in France a handsome, intelligent and witty young man was adored by beautiful ladies at Versailles. Quickly, he drew his attention to one of the richest French only children. On June 26, 1779 he asked Gustav III to support his advances to Miss Necker. However, since the chosen girl was then just 13 years old, matrimonial plans had to be postponed for the future. In March 1780 the young diplomat was promoted to the rank of *stabskapitän* in the Södermanland regiment. His salary increased after that promotion. During his stay in France Staël von Holstein and Ambassador Gustav Philip Creutz got to know each other better. The latter one soon became his devoted friend and protector. In April 1782 Creutz began to publicly designate Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein as a representative of Swedish interests in the French capital after his own nearly expected departure from Paris. At the same time, Creutz both strongly insisted on Necker to agree to the marriage of his daughter and wrote to

Gustav III. He explained to the latter one that Staël, as a new Swedish Ambassador to Paris, would get one of the largest fortunes in Europe. According to his assessment, Jacques Necker's fortune equalled the one owned by Charles de Rohan, Prince of Soubise, one of the richest men in France. At the same time, Staël asked the Countess of Boufflers, who was the most important correspondent of the Swedish king, for a protection. Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette also supported him as Creutz's successor. Thus, Gustav III, who initially opposed that nomination, finally agreed on it. In the spring of 1783 Gustav Philip Creutz was summoned to the country to take charge of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The nomination for Staël von Holstein for the post of *chargé d'affaires* of Sweden at Versailles was sent from Stockholm together with orders for Creutz. On July 31, 1783 Staël was promoted to the rank of Minister Plenipotentiary and later that year, in November, he was nominated by the king an Ambassador of Sweden to Paris. On that occasion Gustav III wrote from Florence to the newly assigned ambassador: "If You marry Miss Necker, You will become the wealthiest nobleman in our country and You will be able to say the same thing Caesar said, as he preferred to be the first at home than the second in Rome".

The way to the hand and assets of Anne Louise Germaine Necker, however, was not an easy one. The future father-in-law made prohibitive demands which Staël presented to the king on May 21, 1784. The former Louis XVI's Minister of Finance demanded what follows: 1. A lifetime position of the Swedish Ambassador to Paris for Staël 2. A lifetime salary of 25 thousand *livres* a year for his future son-in-law if he ever had to lose his position 3. A title of the count granted by the King of Sweden 4. The Order of the Polar Star awarded to him 5. Staël's declaration that he would never force his wife to live in Sweden 6. Marie Antoinette's statement that she wished that marriage. From that time on, everything depended on Gustav III's adoption of the above-mentioned terms. Finally, personal visit of the King of Sweden in Paris in June and July 1784 closed long-term negotiations on the marriage of Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein. Gustav III accepted most of Necker's demands. However, the wife- and the husband-to-be still had to wait for their wedding ceremony which took place on Saturday, January 14, 1786 in the chapel of the Swedish embassy in Paris. Thanks to the new, less than twenty-year old, ambassador's wife the Swedish legation had one of the finest salons in the French capital. What is more, Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein found in his young wife a devoted co-worker. In the years 1786–1791 she designed for Gustav III "Bulletins de nouvelles" so as to inform him about the latest trends in French fashion and literature. The position of the Swedish Ambassador to France was quite unique after his marriage to the daughter of Jacques Necker. He was warmly welcomed both, at Versailles by Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette,

princes of the blood, aristocrats or courtiers, and in Paris where, thanks to his father-in-law, he established contacts with financiers, merchants and administrative officials. Staël also proved to be an excellent observer of the French political scene. In terms of political beliefs, he was a supporter of the constitutional monarchy. For that reason he condemned a despotism of both, Louis XVI and his own monarch. Generally, he was regarded as an aristocratic liberal, although he became a baron only on January 24, 1788 after strenuous efforts of his father-in-law at the court of Stockholm¹.

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES, LOST ILLUSIONS: THE INTERNAL SITUATION IN FRANCE IN THE YEARS 1774-1786

From the beginning of his stay in Paris, Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein had the opportunity to observe the first signs of the ongoing crisis of the French state structures. The main problems of Louis XVI's absolute monarchy arouse both, from its financial weakness, inherited from two previous reigns, and its inability to carry out necessary reforms. Only at the very beginning of the reign of that ruler it might seem that in France the era of enlightened and good governance had begun. There were indeed a few outstanding people in the new ministry headed by the acting chief adviser of the king, Jean Frédéric Phélypeaux, Count of Maurepas. Charles Gravier, Count of Vergennes turned out to be a prudent manager of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Claude Louis, Count of Saint-Germain had carried out important reforms in the army as well as military education. Chrétien Guillaume de Lamoignon de Malesherbes, the Minister of the Royal House, softened preventive censorship and carried out humanitarian reforms in the prison system. However, it was Anne Robert Turgot, Baron of Aulne that played a key role in that cabinet. That philosopher, the physiocrats and encyclopedists' close friend, was the Controller-General of Finances who developed a programme

¹ See A. Geffroy, *Gustave III et la cour de France. Suivi d'une étude critique sur Marie-Antoinette et Louis XVI apocryphes*, vol. I, Paris 1867, pp. 365–375, 378–385; L. Leouzon Le Duc, *Introduction in: Correspondance diplomatique de baron de Staël-Holstein ambassadeur de Suède en France et de son successeur comme chargé d'affaires le baron Brinkman. Documents inédits sur la révolution (1783–1799) recouillis aux Archives Royales se Suède* [further on: *Corr. Staël-Holstein*], L. Leouzon Le Duc (ed.), Paris 1881, pp. IV–XVII; K. Kumlien, *Staël von Holstein Erik Magnus*, in: *Svenska Män och Kvinnor. Biografisk Uppslagsbok* [further on: *SMoK*], vol. VII, Stockholm 1954, p. 172; *Den introducerade svenska adelns ättartavlor* [further on: *Svenska adelns*], G. Elgenstierna (ed.), vol. VII, Stockholm 1932, pp. 519–520; H.A. Barton, *Gustav III of Sweden and the Enlightenment*, "Eighteenth Century Studies. An Interdisciplinary Journal", vol. VI, No. 1, Berkeley (University of California) 1972–1973, p. 23; *Repertorium der diplomatischen Vertreter aller Länder* [further on: *Repertorium*], vol. III (1764–1815), O.F. Winter (ed.), Graz–Köln 1965, p. 408. See also J. Wickman, *Madame de Staël och Sverige. Bidrag till Madame de Staëls biografi. Huvudsakligen efter hittills otryckta originalhandskrifter*, Lund 1911, pp. 1–50; A. Sorel, *Mme de Staël*, Paris 1890.

of fundamental reforms. It was aimed at economic liberalisation and cooperation of elected representatives of taxpayers and state administration in managing economy and tax collection. The reform had to introduce also a general income tax. Initially, Turgot avoided sensitive tax matters and tried to improve the balance of payments by tightening expenditure control and introducing several savings. He abolished rationing and limited restrictions that were constraining a development of the French economy. He eliminated the majority of guilds, introduced free trade in grain and turned the royal corvée into a road tax paid also by the nobility and the clergy. He tried to abolish most of internal tariffs as well. The minister's initiatives were not well received. They were criticised by both, the courtly nobility and the rich bourgeoisie. What is more, each Turgot's decree encountered strong resistance from the parliaments which not only defended old corporate and estate privileges but also were using a political demagoguery in a clever way. In the spring of 1776 the court, the aristocracy and the clergy together with parliamentary and finance activists united against Turgot. He was dismissed on May 12, 1776 by the government as an opponent of the retaliatory war with England. Most of reforms carried out by him were, therefore, cancelled. When he was departing from his post he wrote prophetic words to Louis XVI: "Never forget, Your Majesty, that it was a weakness that put Charles I's head on the chopping block". It was a good warning for the king who "was fair-minded and had a good heart but lacked the strength of character and the perseverance in proceedings". Turgot's fall was a sad harbinger of the subsequent failures of the French monarchy. A large part of the blame for those failures might be attributed to the Count of Maurepas. He "presided the Council and made Louis XVI's mind uncertain and nature wavering. He accustomed him to half measures, changing systems, reckless actions, and above all, taught him how to make use of others"².

In the spring of 1777 a banker from Geneva residing in Paris, Jacques Necker, was appointed a new Controller-General of Finances. As the father-in-law-to-be of Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein was a foreigner and the Protestant, he could not be a member of the Royal Council, nor the ministerial committees. He could work with the king only in the presence of the Count of Maurepas. All those restrictions did not prevent him, however, from designing subsequent reforms. As an admirer of Colbert, Necker was hostile to the physiocrats. He quickly returned to the policy of rationing and gradually started to impose

² See E. Rostworowski, *Historia powszechna. Wiek XVIII*, Warszawa 1977, pp. 886–887; J. Baszkiewicz, *Historia Francji*, Wrocław 1978, pp. 391–392; idem, *Ludwik XVI*, Wrocław 1983, pp. 39–41, 46–58, 62–74; M. Żywczyński, *Historia powszechna 1789–1870*, Warszawa 1977, p. 20; M. Mignet, *Historia rewolucji francuskiej od roku 1789 do 1814*, Warszawa 1890, pp. 9–11. For more information on the above-mentioned problems see E. Faure, *La disgrâce de Turgot. 12 mai 1776*, Paris 1961.

more and more restrictions on the French economy. The new head of the Ministry of Finance regulated the tax administration and reduced government's spending in a short time. He also introduced a few cautious reforms which were carried out in the spirit of the enlightened absolutism. Thus, he modernised hospitals, nursing homes, shelters and prisons. He abolished personal serfdom of peasants in royal domains as well. The most important reform of Necker was, however, the one undertaken in the years 1778–1780. At that time, he attempted to create provincial assemblies which were to improve local administration and weaken the influence of the parliaments on a tax policy of the government. Only two assemblies, in Berry and Haute-Guyenne provinces, started to operate, though. Little was done by Necker on the key issue concerning the restoration of the Royal Treasury. He was aware of the limited abilities of French taxpayers and so he avoided raising old and introducing new taxes. Nonetheless, he had to meet increasing financial demands of the king and his ministers which were justified by the costs of American war. Thus, he raised several internal and foreign loans which helped him to patch budget holes. Spectacular savings in public expenditure and improvements in tax administration, however, could not satisfy Louis XVI, nor the public opinion. A chronic crisis of state finances was deepened significantly because of approximately two billion *livres* which France had spent on its war with England in the years 1778–1783. Loans contracted by Necker increased royal debt by further 600 million *livres*. The Controller-General of Finances, who in the autumn of 1780 gained access to ministerial committees and strengthened, at least formally, his position at court, could not also reduce enormous salaries paid by Louis XVI to the members of the royal family, court dignitaries and the aristocracy. In February 1781 Necker published, with the consent of Louis XVI, a report on the state of public finances (the *Compte-Rendu*). The report was to justify to the society the lack of effects of the previous actions and, at the same time, strengthen his own position in the ministry. The Controller-General of Finances not only explained in his report intricate mechanisms of the treasure machinery, but also revealed to a wide public the extravagance of the court. Thus, in the spring of 1781 Necker became the object of fierce attacks by royal brothers, Louis, Count of Provence and Charles, Count of Artois, the court aristocracy and parliaments. The banker from Geneva was accused of bringing down the monarchical system. For some people his report on the state of royal finances allowed dangerous discussions of hitherto secret state affairs, popularised the idea of social control over the treasure and asked taxpayers to give their opinion and consent on the introduction of new taxes. Louis XVI was seriously alarmed by attacks on Necker. The king consulted Charles de Vergennes on the *Compte-Rendu* and after his fierce criticism he dismissed

the Controller-General of Finances on May 19, 1781. After his demission all Necker's reforms were completely blocked for a few years. On November 21, 1781 a chief royal adviser, the Count of Maurepas, died. No one was able to replace him. Yet, Charles de Vergennes's relations with the monarch were closer than those of other ministers. Although the king confidentially consulted him on most important decisions, he did not decide to give him a dominant position in the government. France, therefore, had no prime minister while the situation in the country was becoming more and more tight³.

In February 1783 Charles de Vergennes became a Chairman of the Council of Finance. However, he did not strengthen his position at the cabinet. Louis XVI did not intend to raise him to the rank of a prime minister. He still thought that he was able to rule the country on his own. In reality, however, shortly after the death of Maurepas, it was Marie Antoinette and related to her court coteries who had the decisive influence on state affairs. Extravagance and reckless behaviour of a beautiful, flighty and frivolous queen might have decisively contributed to a significant reduction of the monarch's authority. Successive ministers of finance yielded to her and still patched budget holes, trying to keep a tight rein on royal expenses at the same time. On November 3, 1783 Charles Alexandre de Calonne took over the management of the Ministry of Finance. He discontinued savings of his predecessors. He did not stint on money for the needs of the court and aristocracy. Without batting an eyelid he paid enormous salaries for princes of the blood and repaid huge debts of the royal family. Some maliciously claimed that he even used his position to meet his creditors' claims. New head of the Ministry of Finance had his reasons for such a nonchalance and extravagance. He was convinced that large expenditures invigorate economy and *per saldo* contribute to the growth of wealth for both, the state and its citizens. The minister covered steadily growing and completely irrational expenses of the Royal Treasury by incurring new internal and foreign loans. One did not have to wait long for effects of such a policy. In the middle of 1786 a financial situation of the monarchy was almost catastrophic. Calonne's could not count on any new loan. The public debt was close to five billion and the government planned to reach a deficit of approximately 100 million *livres*. In that situation, Calonne had no other option but to introduce reforms already planned by his predecessors.

³ See E. Rostworowski, *op. cit.*, p. 888; J. Baszkiewicz, *Ludwik XVI*, pp. 79–80, 95–100, 104–105, 107–113, 116–117; idem, *Historia...*, p. 392; M. Żywczyński, *op. cit.*, p. 20; M. Mignet, *op. cit.*, pp. 11–13; A. Soboul, *Rewolucja francuska 1789–1799*, Warszawa 1951, p. 48. For more information on Necker's activities as the Controller-General of Finances see J. Egret, *Necker, ministre de Louis XVI, 1776–1790*, Paris 1975. For his socio-economic and political programme see H. Grange, *Les idées de Necker*, Paris 1963.

In August 1786 the Minister of Finance, largely inspired by old Turgot's ideas, presented the king with a draft reform enclosed in the memorandum entitled "Project on how to improve finances". It provided a number of guidelines on how to stimulate domestic production, such as elimination of the *corvée*, internal duties and excise taxes on craft products or limitation of restrictions on free trade in grain. The salt tax, heretofore uneven for each province, was to be uniform throughout the kingdom. The twentieth penny tax on real estates, not paid by the nobility and the clergy, was to be replaced by a ground subsidy which had to be paid without exception or any distinction by all landowners. Calonne also intended to impose the stamp tax, the better usage of state demesnes and a transformation of the Discount Bank into the National Bank which could support the state with loans. Provincial assemblies of the advising character were to work together with state administration on the planned reform. They were to be elected by all taxpayers, regardless of their state, who had to receive specified income from the land, though. Calonne's project led to a violation of a social structure of the *ancien régime*, as its aim was to abolish provincial and estate tax benefits. The minister managed, however, to convince Louis XVI of his idea. The latter simply believed that the whole plan was just a clever financial trick and it would not change anything in the existing social and political system. Calonne also knew that parliaments would never agree on such edicts. Therefore, he persuaded the king that there was a need to organise the meeting of most important personages whose opinion would be binding for national parliaments. On December 29, 1786, during the meeting of the Council, the king decided to convene the Assembly of Notables. At the Minister of Finance's request, Louis XVI appointed 144 notables a list of whom was secretly compiled by the king, Calonne and Vergennes. The notables were to be chosen from the representatives of the higher clergy, great feudal lords, members of parliaments, commissarial officers, representatives of estates' provincial and municipal authorities. The number of townspeople in that group was rather low while *noblesse de robe* had quite a huge representation. Calonne counted on a full submission of so a carefully selected group of people. In fact, the monarchy capitulated to notables when it asked for their approval for the intended reforms rather than impose its will on them. At least, it was the opinion of young Joseph Alexandre, Viscount of Ségur. On December 29, 1786, being asked about the latest news, he replied that "There is a big and very important news, hard to believe it's true: The king has just resigned"⁴.

⁴ See J. Baszkiewicz, *Ludwik XVI*, pp. 163–166, 169, 173–174, 175–177; idem, *Historia...*, p. 393; E. Rostworowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 888–889; A. Soboul, *op. cit.*, pp. 50–51; M. Mignet, *op. cit.*, pp. 12–13. See also *Mémoires secrets de J.M. Augeard, secrétaire commandements de la reine Marie Antoinette (1760–1800). Documents inédits sur les événements et les derniers années du*

THE ASSEMBLY OF NOTABLES: THE ORIGINS OF THE OPPOSITION OF THE PRIVILEGED

The Swedish ambassador closely followed all Calonne's actions. Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein, an aristocratic liberal and Necker's son-in-law, was, in fact, a strong opponent of the Minister of Finance. He also sympathised with the opposition of the nobles and parliaments against actions of Louis XVI's government. In his message dated January 5, 1787 he not only informed Stockholm about the French ruler's decision to convene the Assembly of Notables, but also emphasised his satisfaction that Calonne had many reasons to fear the Parliament of Paris which certainly would never register tax edicts designed by him. He was convinced that notables were the only salvation for Calonne who faced a total bankruptcy of the treasury and a threat of complete loss of esteem for the government in the society. As a keen observer, the Swedish diplomat foresaw future problems of the French ministry. He supposed that the assembly would not only concentrate on tax issues, but also would present some political demands to the king. It is also worth noticing that at that time Staël von Holstein expressed his opinion that Louis XVI would not achieve the desired success and sooner or later he would have to appeal to the Estates-General elected by the nation. He predicted that further actions on the French political scene would depend on a courage and determination of the notables. He ended his message with the statement "this is one of the most interesting events in the country I have witnessed since my stay in France". For current interests of Sweden, however, a much more important issue was who would manage the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Charles de Vergennes had been ill for a long time and his imminent death was expected. At the beginning of February Staël's messages included expectations regarding a successor to the dying minister. The Swedish ambassador supposed it would be the Count of Jaucourt [probably Louis Philippe Antoine – author's note]. Vergennes would surely wish for it, as for him Jaucourt would be the best successor of his policy. But for many others it was Paul François, Duke of La Vauguyon that should be Vergennes's successor because he was favoured by the public opinion. As possible candidates there were also considered Louis Auguste, Baron of Breteuil, Louis Marie, Duke of Châtelet-Lomont and, supported by Marie Antoinette, Etienne Charles Loménie de Brienne, Archbishop of Toulouse. For Staël himself, the best successor to Vergennes would be Emmanuel Guignard François, Count of Saint-Priest. Yet, all those assumptions proved to be wrong. Charles de Vergennes died on February 13, 1787.

His death was not regretted in Stockholm. The former Ambassador of France to Madrid, Armand Marc, Count of Montmorin Saint-Hérem, became the new Minister of Foreign Affairs. According to the Swedish diplomat, he was chosen by the king despite the queen's clear rejection. Staël barely knew the new head of the French foreign policy. Thus, he wrote to Gustav III that the new minister should be given more time and only then it would be possible to discover his political principles and the way he played his new role⁵.

In his next messages the Swedish ambassador described in details the meeting of the Assembly of Notables that took place at Versailles on February 22, 1787. He discussed the content of Calonne's inaugural speech in which the minister presented to notables underlying assumptions of the reform designed by him. At the beginning of the meeting Calonne revealed the budget deficit that was greatly underestimated to 80 million *livres*. He also proposed the introduction of a new local government system. According to the Swedish diplomat, Calonne intended to replace estates provincial, that had been operating for centuries within estate provinces (*pays d'état*), with provincial assemblies. The latter ones had already been designed by Turgot and Necker. He also wanted to introduce such assemblies to elective provinces (*pays d'élection*), so far lacking local government. The assemblies were to consist of representatives of all estates elected by all taxpayers of the province whose ground rent amounted to at least 600 *livres* a year. According to the project, one deputy had to be sent to the new assembly by each parish. As for the last Calonne's proposal, Staël wrote that local government reform was certainly needed and useful. However, the public opinion perceived it as a consolation to people at the time when the government aimed at establishing new taxes of millions worth. In the next part of the message the ambassador wrote that Calonne wanted to strike mainly tax privileges of the clergy which was sure to cause resistance of all representatives of that state. The minister's planned breach of privilege system was badly received by the French public opinion as well. In Staël's opinion, privileges were perceived as the last obstacle for the royal arbitrariness and despotism. Privileges were for the French people the substitute for the long lost freedom, too. Thus, the meeting of the Assembly of Notables aroused great public interest. As to avoid any major unrest among the crowd, both, at Versailles and in Paris, notables had to keep subjects of their discussions secret. Concerns of the ministry proved to be most reasonable. As the ambassador had

⁵ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, January 5, 1787, Riksarkivet in Stockholm [further on: RA], Gallica vol. 470, no page numbering (this remark applies to all files of Riksarkivet); A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige och den franska revolutionen. Bidrag om Sveriges och Frankrikes inbördes förhållande i slutet av 1700-talet*, vol. I (*Gustav III:s tid*), Stockholm 1920, p. 193. See also E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, February 8 and 15, 1787, RA, Gallica vol. 470; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 37–41.

expected, significant differences in opinions emerged very quickly among the government and notables⁶.

Already on March 1 Staël informed Gustav III of a strong opposition that Calonne encountered in the Assembly of Notables. It was especially the information on the disorder in the French finances that aroused dissatisfaction among notables. During the meeting the king was accused of having no idea neither about his own interests nor affairs related to the finances of the state. Notables began to suspect that they had been assembled only to give the appearance that the nation agreed on major fiscal changes prepared by the Minister of Finance. In their view, however, changes were designed to increase the income of the Royal Treasury, not to heal public finances. Especially the proposal to introduce a general ground tax was severely criticised. Among members of the Assembly of Notables only the youngest brother of the king, the Count of Artois, was outraged by the fierce resistance that the king's proposals had encountered. On that occasion, he expressed the view that the king had the right to impose taxes as he wanted, in the way that was most convenient for him. The Archbishop of Narbonne criticised such a reasoning and, to the consternation of the count, he was supported by all other notables. In the course of the meeting the assembly also requested that the government reported on the way the state finances had been managed in the past few years. Much to the outrage of the Swedish ambassador, Calonne tried to dump the responsibility for a poor state of public finances to his father-in-law, Necker. Fortunately, no one ever believed in those accusations. To Staël's satisfaction, every day the position of the Minister of Finance became weaker and weaker. Even the queen joined notables and the public opinion and turned against him. According to the Swedish diplomat, Marie Antoinette believed in Calonne's mind but she came to the conclusion that he lacked moral virtues so necessary for the administrator of public finances. Stockholm's representative also noted with some satisfaction that the French public liked the Assembly of Notables more, as it admired its noble and oppositional nature⁷.

On March 15, 1787 Staël wrote in his message that Louis François, Prince of Conti, together with all members of his bureau, signed a protest against Calonne's ground tax. On that occasion Conti asked the king to release him from the participation in works of the assembly. Louis XVI listened to the prince but he did not let him withdraw from heading his bureau. Louis Philippe, Duke of Orléans, however, supported his cousin and refused to head his bureau as well. He stated at the same time that if Calonne's plan

⁶ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, February 25, 1787, RA, Gallica vol. 470; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 41–43.

⁷ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, March 1, 4 and 8, 1787, RA, Gallica vol. 470; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 44–46.

was implemented, he would lose 100 thousand *écus* from his annuity. The Swedish ambassador also seemed, from the very beginning, to have no illusions about the substance of Calonne's actions. He wrote in the very message: "It is quite obvious that nothing he wants depends on his believes, he only needs money, even demands it, and if notables accede to this, they will be able to freely change the plan he submitted to them". In his next message Staël, with a clear satisfaction, emphasised the fact that the French public opinion wanted Calonne's resignation and disapproved of his hostility towards notables. The notables were still attacking Calonne and categorically demanded a proper organisation of state finances and savings done by the state and the court. The ambassador assumed, however, that the king would support the minister and would not allow his dismissal. Meanwhile, the situation was deteriorating. On April 1 Staël reported to the court of Stockholm that on March 27 the Assembly of Notables had rejected all proposals presented to it by the Minister of Finance. Thus, the latter published his famous "Notification" and launched a frontal attack on tax privileges of the nobility and the clergy. Such an action outraged notables of two higher estates who in the following days continued vicious attacks on the Controller-General of Finances. As some ministers turned against Calonne, the government split into two parts. The ruler was also under the influence of his court. In that situation, on April 8, 1787 the king dismissed Charles de Calonne and his fierce opponent, the Keeper of the Seals, Armand Thomas Hue de Miromesnil. Staël welcomed the fall of the former Minister of Finance. He wrote on that occasion that it was widely assumed that his successor would be either the leader of the opposition in the Assembly of Notables, the Archbishop of Toulouse, Loménie de Brienne, or the former minister, Jacques Necker. Surprisingly for all observers of the French political scene, the king appointed to the position of the Controller-General of Finances old Michel Bouvard de Fourqueux (born in 1719). The new minister immediately had to face an extremely difficult task. According to Staël, at the beginning of April 1787 French finances were in a terrible state. There was no money even for the most necessary expenses and the cash stocked in the treasury was sufficient to cover expenses to the end of the month only⁸.

⁸ The Assembly of Notables' structure was quite complicated. The total number of 144 notables was in fact divided into seven categories, so called bureaux. Each of the princes of the blood headed one bureau, the Commission of the Assembly of Notables. The following members of the royal family of the Bourbons headed commissions: Louis, Count of Provence, Charles, Count of Artois, Louis Philippe, Duke of Orléans, Louis Joseph, Prince of Condé, Louis Henri, Duke of Bourbon, Louis François, Prince of Conti and Louis Jean, Duke of Penthièvre. There were bureaux that voted. Four bureaux formed the majority and 11 votes were needed to obtain the majority in each bureau. Thus, Calonne, at least in theory, needed only 44 votes to push through the projects of reforms presented to the assembly. See J. Baszkiewicz, *Ludwik XVI*, pp. 178, 180; E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, March 15, 1787, RA, Gallica vol. 470;

On April 15 the ambassador of Gustav III noted that Jacques Necker, who had recently published a response to false allegations made against him by Calonne, was ordered to depart immediately for a distance of ten miles from Paris. He did not seem, however, to pay much attention to the fact. It was widely believed that his father-in-law's exile was temporary and sooner or later he would be entrusted with the management of finances. Yet, Staël followed with interest actions of the Archbishop of Toulouse who attempted to replace hatred Calonne at Louis XVI's side. In late April the Swedish diplomat anticipated that the archbishop would soon become a member of the Royal Council. The rumour had it that Etienne Charles Loménie de Brienne, a very ambitious and aspiring to the post of the prime minister man, would propose Necker as the head of the Ministry of Finance. Meanwhile, notables continued their attacks on the royal government and demanded a detailed report on expenditures of all ministers. Their attitude became more and more inconvenient for the king. In order to weaken the opposition of notables, Louis XVI appointed to the Council the Archbishop of Toulouse, the former leader of the opposition in the assembly. He was nominated a head of the Ministry of Finance on May 1, 1787. According to Staël, Loménie de Brienne gained his position in the ministry thanks to the queen's strong support. Louis XVI did not like the archbishop but he agreed on his appointment because he could not cope with the crisis of public finances on his own. Staël also wrote that notables hoped that the budget deficit in 1787 would not exceed 147 million *livres*. Thus, they recommended the government to make significant cuts in its spending. In response, the king presented them with a plan of savings. Staël predicted that in reality he would not compromise and never agree on a weakening of crown's prerogatives. Because the government was unable to reach an agreement with notables, Staël considered it very likely that the Assembly of Notables would be resolved in the near future. As the Archbishop of Toulouse seemed to be a key figure on the French political scene, in early May the Swedish envoy to Versailles sent to Gustav III a short description of him. In Staël's opinion, Loménie de Brienne's entry to the Council should lead to positive changes on the French political scene in the near future. The archbishop was to be a wise, determined, gifted, ambitious and vigorous man. Staël predicted that in a short time he might become the prime minister. Loménie de Brienne started very well, indeed. He promised savings of 40 million *livres*. He led to the dismissal of Fourqueux who was considered a follower of Calonne's policy. Thanks to him Villedeuil, one of notables and a former commissarial officer from Rouen, was appointed to the post of the Controller-General of Finances.

Corr. Staël-Holstein, pp. 46–47. For other matters see E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, March 22 and April 1, 8 and 12, 1787, RA, Gallica vol. 470; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 47–51.

He also submitted to the king projects of deep reforms that soon were to be presented to the public opinion. Staël praised the archbishop's actions, however, he did not believe in the agreement between Louis XVI and the Assembly of Notables. He wrote that in Paris it was openly said that the king wanted only to impose new taxes and did not intend to make any changes in dysfunctional state structures⁹.

Predictions of the Swedish ambassador were confirmed soon. In the second half of May 1787 the crisis within the assembly deepened. Notables wanted to appoint a committee of five members to permanently control the head of the state finances. The king, however, definitely refused. He did not want any social control and did not intend to give up his exclusive right to appoint and dismiss ministers. On the other hand, notables categorically refused to accept tax projects proposed by the Archbishop of Toulouse. In such a situation Loménie de Brienne, who realised that only new taxes could prevent France from a financial disaster, decided to send notables home. On May 25, 1787 the last session of the Assembly of Notables took place. According to the Swedish envoy, even though formal meetings of the assembly were a total failure, they still could bring positive consequences for France. In one of his messages he wrote that: "It is certain that if the archbishop has talents which are attributed to him, he may unbelievably benefit from the current crisis. Never has any minister faced the smaller resistance he faces at the moment. If he is able to benefit from it, he will restore France's strength, bring back its prosperity and significantly strengthen the royalty". A week later Staël wrote that after government's experiences with the Assembly of Notables it was unlikely that a similar assembly should be convened in the near future. However, the meetings of notables brought some positive results. According to the Swedish ambassador, thanks to the assembly France restored its financial credibility and renewed its credit. What is more, very useful and necessary provincial assemblies were established and a state of royal finances was fully disclosed to the public. Moreover, the Archbishop of Toulouse was appointed to the Council during one of the assembly's meetings. The Swedish diplomat liked him from the beginning because he was a known admirer of Necker and it was widely expected that he would contribute to the latter's return from exile. Staël also presumed that Loménie de Brienne would be a member of the French ministry for a long time. He only did not know when he was going to obtain the dignity of the prime minister which was the object of all his desires, hopes and ambitions¹⁰.

⁹ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, April 15, 26, 29 and May 3, 6 (apostille) and 17, 1787, RA, Gallica vol. 470; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 52–54, 56–57.

¹⁰ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, May 24 and 31, 1787, RA, Gallica vol. 470; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 58–59. For more information on the Assembly of Notables see J. Baszkiewicz, *Ludwik XVI*, pp. 178–185; J. Godechot, *La prise de Bastille. 14 juillet 1789*, Paris 1965, pp. 131–135; A. Soboul, *op. cit.*, pp. 51–52; E. Rostworowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 889–890.

A GUERRILLA WAR BETWEEN THE MONARCHY AND PARLIAMENTS

Staël predicted the archbishop's intentions very well. Over the next few weeks the latter one strengthened his position in the ministry, as he aimed at taking the reins in France. He also tried to gain the favour of the public opinion. Thus, he introduced drastic savings in spending of the state and the court. Etienne Charles Loménie de Brienne perfectly knew that savings alone were insufficient to plug the leaky budget. He had to make the Parliament register tax edicts formerly rejected by notables. Everything went very well at the beginning. In June 1787 the Parliament of Paris registered without resistance edicts on the introduction of free trade in grain, the abolition of the *corvée* and the establishment of provincial assemblies. In the latter, however, significant amendments were made. Provincial assemblies could not be created in provinces where estates provincial were functioning. It was also decided that in those assemblies a division into three estates would be maintained and the presidency would be reserved for the nobility and the clergy. The Parliament agreed on giving to the third estate half of the seats in new assemblies and introducing there the individual voting. Here, however, ended the list of the Archbishop's of Toulouse successes. Troubles of the government began in July when it presented to the Parliament firstly an edict on a stamp tax, and few weeks later an edict on a general ground tax. The Parliament firmly refused to register both edicts. It also adopted a resolution that the Estates-General must be convened before each imposition of a new tax. In that situation on August 6, 1787 the king convened the Parliament at Versailles and during the *lit de justice* ordered a compulsory registration of both edicts. The very next day the Parliament rebelled against Louis XVI and declared that forced registries are illegal and invalid¹¹.

On August 16 Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein wrote to Stockholm that the court decided to exile the Parliament of Paris to Troyes. It was an old way to pacify the parliamentary opposition that had been used many times during the previous reign. The government's decision, however, caused the stir that time. According to the public opinion, the Parliament was punished for the idea that it should be people who decided on taxes. Staël did not sympathise with the French Parliament as he did not believe that it was defending the public interest. He pointed to the fact, not noticed by most people in France, that the Parliament defended first and foremost its own privileges. The Swedish diplomat also criticised recent actions of Louis XVI. According to him, the

¹¹ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, July 19, 26 and August 9, 1787, RA, Gallica vol. 470; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 60–62; J. Baszkiewicz, *Ludwik XVI*, pp. 188–191; A. Soboul, *op. cit.*, p. 52 (Here the incorrect date of the *lit de justice* that took place at Versailles: July 6 instead of August 6).

latter one fell into an increasing conflict with the public opinion in his desire to gain more money. It could put his government in a difficult situation soon. The convening of the Estates-General was widely demanded. In Staël's opinion, the French society would also force the king to make a decision on that issue, as it could use combined resistance of all corporations and provinces. The Archbishop of Toulouse lost the trust he had enjoyed at the beginning of his governments. Only a new and efficient administrator could stave off the crisis which heralded the approaching revolution. Needless to say, the Swedish diplomat was thinking about his own father-in-law, Jacques Necker. A week later Staël wrote about disturbances in Paris where supporters of the exiled Parliament agitated among people and protesters clashed with the police and the army. In face of those events gatherings on capital's streets and in public gardens were banned. According to the Swedish diplomat, the exiled Parliament of Paris was warmly welcomed by the residents of Troyes. Its members were also to make a solemn promise that they would seek to convene the Estates-General as it was demanded by the majority of the public opinion. On September 2 Staël wrote to his king another important message. On August 26, 1787 the Archbishop of Toulouse was officially appointed the prime minister. According to the ambassador, it was the queen who forced the king to make that nomination. However, it did not improve the position of the government. Provincial parliaments also opposed new taxes and supported the convening of the Estates-General. Charles Guillaume Lambert, not Necker, became a new head of the treasury. He was more submissive to the archbishop and Staël supposed that a shift in the post of the Controller-General of Finances would bring no changes at all. In another message Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein expressed the opinion that although Loménie de Brienne was a vigorous man, he had to deal with a financial meltdown, crisis in every area of state administration and widespread discontent. The Swedish ambassador was not, therefore, surprised when the court decided to negotiate with the exiled Parliament. After a short time both sides came to an agreement. Loménie de Brienne decided to withdraw edicts on stamp and ground taxes. In return, the Parliament promised to approve doubling of rates on the twentieth penny tax. On September 20, 1787 the Parliament returned to Paris. Its reputation, however, was undermined. It was accused of cowardice and inconsistency. The Archbishop of Toulouse did not improve his image, either. Staël claimed that the public opinion accused the prime minister of not having any plan of reforms at all¹².

¹² See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, August 16, 23 and September 2 (apostille), 9, 13 and 23, 1787, RA, Gallica vol. 470; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 63–70. See also J. Baszkiewicz, *Ludwik XVI*, pp. 192–194; A. Soboul, *op. cit.*, p. 52; E. Rostworowski, *op. cit.*, p. 890.

Gustav III was heavily disturbed by news reaching Stockholm. On August 31, 1787 the ruler of Sweden prepared extensive instructions for his Ambassador to the court of Versailles. He wrote that an old alliance between Sweden and France did not allow the Stockholm court to remain indifferent to what was happening in that country. The king demanded information about the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Armand Marc de Montmorin. He also wanted to know Staël's opinion on the Archbishop of Toulouse. He was interested in the attitude of the Parliament of Paris. He came to the conclusion that in France the nation conspired against the court and the ministry. Thus, he wanted to know who was the head of that conspiracy and what were the goals of the opposition. For that reason, he demanded from Staël to give him all details necessary to describe the most important figures on the French political scene. Gustav III, however, was most bothered by the problem whether changes in France affected its government's attitude towards Sweden and allied commitments adopted by the court of Versailles. The Swedish ambassador, at the request of his king, observed actions of the Archbishop of Toulouse more carefully. In late September he wrote to Gustav III that Loménie de Brienne had begun efforts to be a head of the Ministry of Finance. Staël did not believe, however, that he would be entrusted with so much power. He also wrote that according to the pernicious rumour, the archbishop wanted to become irreplaceable for the king and personally urged parliaments to oppose. The Swedish diplomat came to the conclusion that Loménie de Brienne was a wise man but of changeable moods. He thought that the best way to fight the deficit was to increase taxes and, therefore, did not seek for a better solution. The biggest mistake of the archbishop was that he relied too much on the opinion of others. Staël even stated that he had no control over his own government where Breteuil and Montmorin were making important decisions without the prime minister's knowledge and consent. Meanwhile, the opposition against the government spread even more widely. Provincial parliaments followed the example of the Parliament of Paris. On October 14 Staël von Holstein wrote to Gustav III that in the Dauphiné and other provinces there was a dispute between commissarial officers and local parliaments. At the beginning of November the Swedish ambassador praised savings in public spending introduced by the Archbishop of Toulouse. At the same time, however, he argued that the way out of the crisis led through the agreement between the government and parliaments. In mid-November Staël was sure that the Parliament of Paris would not register any new government loan (Loménie de Brienne planned to borrow 420 million *livres*) without the promise of convening the Estates-General. According to the Swedish diplomat, France envisaged great changes. The French people would be the first ones to witness fundamental political shifts caused by

financial difficulties. In his opinion, the state of minds in France had recently changed a lot. On the one hand, there were philosophers who contributed to it. On the other, the indecision of the ministry gave Louis XVI's subjects courage based on the conviction that the royal power was weak. That belief seemed to be confirmed by the friends of the Archbishop of Toulouse. They began to spread rumours that he wanted to convene the Estates-General and was increasing parliaments' resistance only to make the king decide on the matter. However, it seemed unlikely to Staël that the prime minister should jeopardise the royal authority in such a way¹³.

In the meantime, Loménie de Brienne tried to convince the Parliament to register his edict on new loans. He even managed to get the support of its members for his government with a favourable majority. Unexpectedly, Louis XVI decided to go to the Parliament in person and urge it to register so much needed edicts. On November 20, 1787 Staël von Holstein gave a detailed account of a turbulent parliamentary session which had taken place the day before. The king issued an edict on a new loan and granting civil rights to the Protestants. He also promised to submit a detailed report on the state of public finances in 1792. According to the Swedish diplomat, the Parliament did not discuss those proposals. Seven counsellors were appealing for nine hours to convene the Estates-General immediately or within next two years. Finally, the king interrupted those discussions and said "I want them to be registered". Then, the Duke of Orléans rose from his seat and asked whether the meeting was transformed into a *lit de justice*. The king denied and said that he still wished them to register the edicts. After that incident Louis XVI immediately left the meeting room and the Parliament prepared an appropriate protest. It adopted a resolution in which it stated that the registration of an edict imposed by force would be illegal. In response, two counsellors of the Parliament, Antoine Sabatier de Castres and Emmanuel Marie Fréteau de Saint-Just, were arrested and imprisoned by the government. The Duke of Orléans received an order to go to one of his rural mansions. Other members of the Parliament were summoned at Versailles where the king promised them that he would convene the Estates-General in 1792. In Staël's opinion, from that moment the main government's concern was to find anyone who would like to lend the Royal Treasury 125 million *livres*. That would determine, according to him, the future fate of the archbishop. Yet, the ambassador was optimistic. He wrote that there was a widespread belief that a good administration should lift France out of the current crisis within next few years. He also predicted that the Parliament should register

¹³ See Gustav III to E.M. Staël v. Holstein, Drottningholm, August 31, 1787, RA, Huvudarkivet, Kabinettet/UD, B1B, vol. 118; E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, September 27, October 14 and November 5, 15 and 18, 1787, *ibidem*, Gallica vol. 470; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 76–77.

an edict on granting civil rights to the Protestants soon. It would cause a great influx of Dutch immigrants to France. At the end of November 1787 Staël von Holstein wrote to Gustav III that the Parliament of Paris had sent a deputation to the king to recall the Duke of Orléans from exile and release two arrested counsellors. According to the Swedish diplomat, despite the sharp conflict between the Parliament and the government, the prevailing mood in Paris was surprisingly good. He started to believe that the government would get the needed loan soon and thus overcome the long-term difficulties¹⁴.

At the time when the despotic monarchy, represented on November 19 by Louis XVI, and the idea of the limited monarchy, supported by the Duke of Orléans, were fighting each other Gustav III had already had a second representative of his interests in Paris. At the beginning of October 1787 a new Swedish diplomat, Carl Gustaf, Baron Schultz von Ascheraden, arrived to the French capital on a special mission. He was born on July 29, 1743 in Zarenkow (Rügen) as a son of Carl Ludwig and Christiane Ulrika Marschalck. He had served in the army since he was nine years old. He raised to the rank of captain in 1775. He left the army in 1781 and in April 1783 took the post of the Swedish Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to the Hague where he stayed until June 18, 1787. On the king's demand (order dated September 21, 1787) he was recalled from his post and sent to Paris to take a closer look at the development of the internal situation in France. He was also to determine prospects of France's foreign policy. Thus, since October 1787 the Stockholm court had been receiving not one but two reports from the French capital. However, Schultz von Ascheraden's messages were not as interesting as Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein's reports. Accounts of two diplomats differed because Schultz von Ascheraden had not received an official accreditation to the court of Versailles and thus, had no opportunity to meet the Archbishop of Toulouse, nor the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Hence, his messages were initially based mainly on media reports¹⁵.

Schultz von Ascheraden became a valuable and competent correspondent of the Swedish king when he got to know better his new environment. On December 11, 1787 he sent to Gustav III a comprehensive report in which he wrote that the convene of the Estates-General became the main concern of the French public opinion. It was suggested that the Parliament of Paris should represent the Estates-General between their meetings and the king had no right to impose new taxes or get new loans without their consent.

¹⁴ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, November 20, 25 and 29, 1787, RA, Gallica vol. 470; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 77–78. See also J. Baszkiewicz, *Ludwik XVI*, p. 195; A. Soboul, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

¹⁵ See *Svenska adelns*, vol. VII, p. 77; Berättelser från Friherr Schultz von Ascheraden a Paris 1787 och 1788, note on the sheathing, RA, Gallica vol. 498; *Repertorium*, p. 412.

The French people were also worried about the state of public finances. Schultz von Ascheraden claimed that Necker was commonly mentioned as a future healer of finances. The Lutheran representative of Sweden was deeply interested in an edict on granting civil rights to the Protestants. Thus, he welcomed the fact that during the Parliament's discussion on it only the Archbishop of Paris criticised the project. Despite the tolerance of most members of the Parliament, Schultz was not sure whether the government would succeed in that matter. A group of Catholic fanatics together with the well-known bigots (among them the Marquise of Noailles was said to be the most active one) attempted to obstruct the registration of the edict. Staël von Holstein confirmed Schultz von Ascheraden's words. He also wrote that the Archbishop of Paris and part of the clergy was strongly opposed to the registration of the edict on the Protestants. The ambassador also informed that the Parliament of Paris submitted a new letter to the king in which it asked him to recall the Duke of Orléans from exile and release two arrested counsellors. Last diplomats' December messages were entirely devoted to a growing conflict between the government and parliaments. On December 20 Schultz von Ascheraden wrote that the Parliament of Rennes adopted a resolution on recalling the Duke of Orléans from exile and releasing the arrested counsellors. On December 30 Staël informed about a resolution adopted by the same Parliament against all new taxes. The same decision was to be made by parliaments of Bordeaux and Grenoble. According to the ambassador, at the end of 1787 the province was much more agitated than Paris. That opinion was shared by Schultz von Ascheraden as well¹⁶.

At the beginning of next year there was no major change in the way both diplomats gave their accounts. Troubles of the French government were still broadly described by them. First of all, there were financial difficulties. People were commonly convinced that the cause of all France's misfortunes was a mess in its finances. The weakness of the government, frequent changes of ministers, poor state of the army, the commerce and the manufactures, all those problems were connected with the primal cause of troubles. Schultz von Ascheraden noticed that a perseverance and peace would be needed as to restore order in finances. The Archbishop of Toulouse was perfectly aware of it. Main points of his recovery programme concentrated on such issues as an organised state of finances, calm internal situation and peaceful foreign policy. For the time being, however, the government had to face a growing economic crisis. The January messages of both Stockholm's representatives included information on awful consequences of the Franco-British trade treaty signed in September 1786. The French market was opened for British

¹⁶ See C.G. Schultz v. Ascheraden to Gustav III, Paris, November 25, December 11, 20 and 30, 1787, RA, Gallica vol. 498; E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, December 13 and 30, 1787, *ibidem*, Gallica vol. 470.

industrial products which were competing with local goods. It caused many bankruptcies and a significant increase in an unemployment rate as many manufactories had been closed. What was even worse, Loménie de Brienne could not deal with a growing opposition of parliaments. Parliaments of Paris, Rennes and Bordeaux were the most rebellious. Parliaments of Grenoble and Toulouse soon joined them. The parliamentarians' revolt was spreading fast. To the surprise of both Swedish diplomats, the archbishop could not decide whether to use force, or be gentle to the increasingly disobedient parliamentary rebels. The situation complicated when the Parliament of Paris opposed arbitrary arrests on the strength of the king's *lettres de cachet* and demanded as a natural law the restoration of a personal liberty. The reaction of the Parliament of Paris started a discussion on the matter. In mid-February Schultz von Ascheraden wrote about a widespread criticism of *lettres de cachet*. He also remarked that although numerous abuses occurred because of their application, the number of warrants of arrests issued by the court was far smaller than the number of *lettres de cachet* which members of parliaments and fathers of families asked for to settle their private affairs. Both Swedish diplomats argued that Catholic fanatics would do everything to prevent the registration of an edict on granting civil rights to the Protestants. Their fears were not fulfilled, though, as on January 29, 1788 the edict was written in the books of the Parliament of Paris. It was only one success the government of Louis XVI could boast of. It did not impress the French public opinion that still remembered a string of failures the cabinet of Versailles had recently endured¹⁷.

The internal situation in France deteriorated in March 1788. Parliaments were increasingly criticising government's intentions. Schultz von Ascheraden wrote at that time to Gustav III that if all parliamentarians' protests were submitted on the behalf of the nation, it might lead to the outbreak of general discontent. It was obvious that in a kingdom so vast as France any changes in internal affairs would trigger the opposition of the interested community. Changes were of such a nature that it was impossible to introduce them in the same manner in all provinces. The Swedish diplomat hoped, however, that the government would overcome the growing crisis. He stated that nothing was more certain than the fact that the king was loved by his people and his prime minister wanted to heal the economy and properly organise finances as soon as possible. Still, it was not an easy task. Schultz von Ascheraden emphasised that stamp and ground taxes were not accepted by a large part of the nation and they could not be introduced before convening the Estates-General. The Swedish diplomat noted that the rumour had it that the king, in order to meet wishes of the nation, would

¹⁷ See C.G. Schultz v. Ascheraden to Gustav III, Paris, January 3, 31 and February 14, 1788, RA, Gallica vol. 498; E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, January 6 (apostille), 8, 24 and 31, 1788, *ibidem*, Gallica vol. 471; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 81–82. See also A. Soboul, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

convene the Estates-General in 1788. However, in late March Schultz von Ascheraden wrote that the government intended to put an end to the former indulgence towards the opposition of the parliaments. It was announced that the *cour royale* was to be established. The body was to be composed of princes, peers and judges appointed by the king. It was to be entrusted with the obligation to register new royal edicts which previously was the prerogative reserved for parliaments. The latter, however, did not stop to oppose. They were consistently refusing to establish provincial assemblies and increase the twentieth penny tax. Schultz von Ascheraden and Staël von Holstein followed with interest the fate of Louis Philippe, Duke of Orléans as well. Both of them noted the fact that the duke was allowed to spend a few hours in Paris. During his stay in the capital the Duke of Orléans visited Loménie de Brienne (the former Archbishop of Toulouse was at that time the Archbishop of Sens). Staël, who particularly disliked the king's cousin, maliciously noted that: "His exile continues but all think it is unjust as he proved by it [an appointment with the archbishop – author's note] that the speech because of which he was in the court's bad books should be attributed to his carelessness rather than courage"¹⁸.

At the end of April 1788 expectations of Swedish diplomats regarding intended changes in the government's attitude towards the opposition came true. Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein wrote that all commanders of garrisons and all commissarial officers were ordered to return to their posts. In his messages he also informed that the government intended to deprive the Parliament of Paris of many rights. Moreover, he envisaged major changes in the organisation of the judiciary. According to the Swedish diplomat, the public was anxiously waiting for next moves of the government expecting "everything but kindness". Schultz von Ascheraden confirmed those fears as he wrote that in Paris it was believed that the *cour royale* would be soon appointed. It was to be composed of princes, peers, judges from the Great Chamber of the Parliament and deputies sent by the estates and provincial assemblies. Only that tribunal was to be authorised to verify and register new royal edicts. The Parliament of Paris opposed the idea from the very beginning. However, this time it intended to do more than just protest. On May 3, 1788 it adopted the famous declaration on fundamental rights of the monarchy and proclaimed itself their main guardian. The resolution aroused strong interest among the French public opinion and made the Parliament more popular again. Schultz, however, did not approve of methods used by cocky jurists, as they threatened the internal peace of the kingdom. It was

¹⁸ See C.G. Schultz v. Ascheraden to Gustav III, Paris, March 3, 12 and 28, 1788, RA, Gallica vol. 498; E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, March 27, 1788, *ibidem*, Gallica vol. 471; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, p. 83.

finally noticed by the cabinet of Versailles as well. On the night from 4 to 5 May there was issued an order to arrest two leaders of the parliamentary opposition, Jean Jacques Duval d'Eprémèsnil and Goislard de Montsabert. Both, however, managed to hide among other members of the Parliament in the Palace of Justice. The Chamber of Peers passed a protest against their arrest. A deputation of the Parliament went at Versailles to hand Louis XVI a proper petition. The king decided not to talk to the parliamentarians as thanks to that act of violence he wanted to strengthen the position of the absolute government. Thus, other members of the Parliament spent the whole night in the Chamber and watched over their two colleagues. On May 6, 1788, at 1 a.m., the Palace of Justice was surrounded by the army. Soldiers entered the Great Chamber but because their commanding officer did not know those who he was ordered to arrest they had to go empty-handed. Only about 11 a.m. both councillors were arrested. After a dramatic, long-lasting meeting, the Parliament passed a solemn protest against actions of the court. On May 8 the king came to the Palace of Justice in person and ordered a compulsory registration of six edicts. He wanted the Keeper of the Seals, Chrétien François de Lamoignon, to put his name behind them. Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein, who described those events in details, wrote in one of his messages that the king's *lit de justice* did not impress anyone very much. He predicted that, given the moods of parliaments and a large part of the public opinion, it would be very difficult for the court to implement the intended reform of the judiciary¹⁹.

The letter sent by Schultz von Ascheraden on May 8, 1788 was his last message from Paris to Stockholm. On March 20 he asked Gustav III for a permission to leave the French capital at the beginnings of May. In the same letter the baron wrote that for health reasons he would like to spend summer in the Czech Eger (Cheb). Schultz von Ascheraden had already fulfilled the mission entrusted to him by the king (I write more about it later in the chapter). Thus, the court of Stockholm did not thwart private plans of the diplomat and granted him an appropriate authorisation. Gustav III seemed to pay little attention to what was happening in France. He assumed that messages from the officially accredited Ambassador to the court of Versailles would be sufficient for him. The ruler of Sweden could not have foreseen that at the beginnings of May 1788 the crisis of the French monarchy would enter a new phase, far more severe than the previous one. Baron Erik Magnus Staël von

¹⁹ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, April 24, 27 and May 1, 1788, RA, Gallica vol. 471; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 83–84; C.G. Schultz v. Ascheraden to Gustav III, Paris, May 1 and 8, 1788, RA, Gallica vol. 498; E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, May 8, 1788, *ibidem*, Gallica vol. 471; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 84–85. See also J. Baszkiewicz, *Ludwik XVI*, pp. 196–197; A. Soboul, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

Holstein, an aristocratic liberal, was once again the only commentator on the events occurring in France at that time. In his message dated May 11 the ambassador presented the detailed objectives of the reform of the judiciary. He wrote about an abolition of the qualified death penalty, obstacles to issue and execute a capital punishment, liquidation of seigniorial courts and parliaments' deprivation of some of their jurisdictions. Lamoignon's reforms also envisaged transforming presidential tribunals (*les présidiaux*) into courts of the first instance and establishing 45 courts of appeal (*Grands Bailliages*). Everything was done to bring the judiciary closer to royal subjects and reduce their legal expenses. The Swedish diplomat devoted most of his attention to a controversial decision of the Keeper of the Seals, that is the idea to create the Plenary Court (*cour plénière*) which was to take over from the Parliament of Paris its right to register new royal edicts. For that reason, Staël once again returned to the fateful meeting of the Parliament from May 8. According to him, it was very short. The king spoke only for 14 minutes and ordered the registration of edicts prepared by the Keeper of the Seals. Then, all peers and members of the Great Chamber were appointed to the *cour plénière*. The Swedish diplomat predicted, however, that the government would have huge problems with completing the composition of the Plenary Court. Members of the Great Chamber opposed to everything that had taken place during the *lit de justice*. They also refused to accept their nomination to the *cour plénière*. Several peers followed their example, too. What is more, the Parliament of Rouen questioned all paragraphs of the royal decree on the reform of the judiciary. In that situation, Paris was anxiously expecting news from other parliaments, especially from Brittany. News from Rennes perplexed observers of the French political scene. On May 18 Staël von Holstein wrote about a rebellion of inhabitants of Brittany where open acts of violence and clashes of people with the army had been noticed. Loménie de Brienne surely did not expect such a resistance. He assured delegates of a rebellious province that the king would respect their privileges and would not impose taxes not approved by their Parliament. According to Staël, on that occasion the king had explicitly and clearly stated that he would convene the Estates-General. The ambassador, however, did not believe in those promises. He supposed that the Archbishop of Sens would use all possible means to defend projects of reforms prepared by the government²⁰.

²⁰ See C.G. Schultz v. Ascheraden to Gustav III, Paris, March 20, 1788, RA, Gallica vol. 498; E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, May 11, 18 and 28, 1788, *ibidem*, Gallica vol. 471; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 85–86. See also A. Söderhjelm, *op. cit.*, p. 194; J. Baszkiewicz, *Ludwik XVI*, pp. 197–199; A. Soboul, *op. cit.*, pp. 53–54.

Over the next few weeks the domestic situation in France had worsened. In early June 1788 Staël informed Gustav III about an increasing resistance in Brittany where 500 people signed a petition to the king against the *cour plénière*. Estates provincial of Brittany sent also a letter to all peers of France in which they called them to defend interests of the nation. As there was also a great agitation in the Dauphiné, the ambassador supposed that the government would send troops against rebellious provinces. That assumption soon proved to be true. In his next message the baron informed the court of Stockholm that many regiments had received orders to march to Brittany where the situation got out of control. Under the crowd's pressure troops that marched to Rennes had to withdraw. The government, however, remained adamant that time and decided to break resistance by force. In retaliation all members of the Parliament of Brittany were expelled from Rennes. New troops, including the Royal Swedes (*Royal Suédoise*) so close to the Swedish diplomat's heart, were sent to the rebellious province. On June 15 Staël wrote that accidents which had occurred in Grenoble caused a great commotion in the cabinet of Versailles. On June 7 rebels from that town together with mountaineers from surrounding villages gathered to defend their Parliament. They threw tiles on troops invading the capital of the Dauphiné and forced them to an infamous retreat. In response, the government authorised local intendants, Gaspard de La Bove and Jules, Duke of Clermont-Tonnere, to use *lettres de cachet* against members of the local Parliament. It also dismissed Grenoble's commanding officer and sent an additional battalion of soldiers to that town. The situation in the Dauphiné seemed to be stable. However, reports on riots were still being sent from other provinces. The hardest was the resistance of Brittany. On July 17, 1788 the Swedish ambassador informed in his message that the Breton nobility sent a deputation of twelve members with a petition to the king that Louis XVI refused to receive. In that situation a new petition was prepared and signed by all Bretons residing in Paris. Among them there were Renaud César, Duke of Choiseul, Charles Juste, Prince of Beauvau, Marie Joseph, Marquis of La Fayette and Jean Raymond, Count of Boisgelin-Cucé. In retaliation the king took their posts and salaries away from them. He also ordered to imprison in the Bastille twelve members of the Breton deputation. Staël von Holstein assumed that the new act of violence would not lead to consequences desired by the court and would only make the Bretons even more stubborn. A fierce resistance of provincial parliaments and estates against reforms introduced by the government had also led to frictions in the cabinet of Versailles. Loménie de Brienne's main opponent, the Baron of Breteuil, had resigned. The public opinion regarded that resignation as a protest against the prime minister's policy. People clearly wanted repressions against archbishop's opponents to

be stopped. At the end of July 1788 Staël von Holstein could not have supposed that the unexpected change at the helm of the French state would take place soon²¹.

At the time when the Swedish diplomat sent to Stockholm his message dated July 27 it seemed that the Archbishop of Sens was in control of the situation. Loménie de Brienne stayed confident and determined in the face of the unleashed elements. He counted on the support of the army and was not disappointed in his hopes. Both, officer corps and soldiers were loyal to the government. In late July the prime minister of Louis XVI could, therefore, conclude that the worst phase of the crisis was already over. However, on July 21, 1788 a spontaneous assembly of estates provincial of the Dauphiné took place at the Vizille castle. During that meeting it was established that henceforth the third estate's representation would be doubled and all votes would be carried out individually, not by estates. The assembly called all provinces to join its resistance and swore not to pay taxes until the Estates-General were convened. Staël did not seem to attach much importance to that incident in his message he sent to Stockholm on August 3, 1788. The resistance against the government was still increasing in Brittany, where the Parliament exiled from Rennes was illegally assembled, and Béarn, where the archbishop had to send additional troops. The Swedish diplomat was convinced that the prime minister fully controlled the situation and would overcome all the difficulties. According to Staël, the resistance against the Archbishop of Sens was only the anger of an armed child facing all power of the French king. In the next few days the situation on the French political scene suddenly changed. It turned out that the Royal Treasury was empty. Thus, Loménie de Brienne, faced with a bankruptcy, was forced to capitulate before the revolt of the nobility and parliaments. On August 8 he suspended the Plenary Court and set the date of convening the Estates-General on May 1, 1789. The resistance of the opposition did not weaken, though. Unable to get more money, on August 19, 1788 the Archbishop of Sens announced a partial bankruptcy of the State Treasury. It aroused panic in Paris and intensified attacks on the prime minister. In such a situation Loménie de Brienne suggested the king that Jacques Necker should become a member of the government. Necker hesitated, made his conditions and delayed with making a decision. Thus, the Archbishop of Sens, opposed by the Count of Artois and abandoned by Marie Antoinette, resigned from his post on August 25, 1788. Jacques Necker took his place and this time he joined the government as a full minister and a head of the Ministry of Finance. On August 31 Erik

²¹ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, June 1, 5, 8, 15 and July 17, 24, 27, 1788, RA, Gallica vol. 471; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 86–88. See also J. Baszkiewicz, *Ludwik XVI*, pp. 199–200; A. Soboul, *op. cit.*, pp. 54–55.

Magnus Staël von Holstein informed the Stockholm court that Necker joined the ministry of the queen and people's will. According to the Swedish diplomat, he yet controlled only his own ministry but it was widely expected that in the future he would become the prime minister. His predecessor, the Archbishop of Sens, left Paris in disgrace of the nation. He was still respected at court, though. Staël also wrote that people were expecting a miracle from Necker. All were convinced that if he did not encounter any obstacles, he would be able to remedy the situation in France in a few years. In Staël's opinion, the people implicitly believed in a lucky star of the new minister. That belief was also shared by the ambassador who finally praised his father-in-law in such words: "His talents, moderation, character and manners earned him so much love that it cannot be expressed strongly enough". At that time the so beloved by the people minister started to demolish the building erected by his predecessor. It was Necker who had the dubious honour of leading the monarchy to a capitulation²².

THE ATTITUDE OF FRANCE AND SWEDEN TOWARDS THE EVENTS IN HOLLAND

Truth to be told, Gustav III was only slightly interested in an internal situation in France. At that time the ruler of Sweden intended to play a great role in the international arena. He expected from the court of Versailles to regularly pay him subsequent instalments of subsidies and not to intrude on his ambitious political plans. At first, those plans seemed to be concentrated on the crisis that the Republic of the United Provinces of the Netherlands had been facing for a long time. At the end of March 1787 Gustav III decided to initiate his Ambassador to Paris to the court of Stockholm's negotiations on the subsidy treaty with Holland. In his message to Staël von Holstein the king wrote that although an internal situation of that country forced him to suspend those negotiations, he did not intend to give up on that issue. Thus, he instructed his ambassador to maintain good relations with Karl Ludwig von Salm-Grumbach who was staying in Paris. He was the author of the idea that six thousand Swedish soldiers could be sent to Holland in exchange for the subsidies that the Republic of the United Provinces would provide to the King of Sweden. The rheingraf came up with that proposal to Count Fredrik Adolf Löwenhielm in Berlin in 1784. The talks were continued next year with the Dutch envoy to Stockholm, Jan Carel van der Borch. However, the illness of the grand pensioner prevented them from finalising that matter. Then, Pehr Olof von Asp held three secret talks with the rheingraf in Holland.

²² See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, August 3, 21 and 31, 1788, RA, Gallica vol. 471; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 88–89. See also J. Baszkiewicz, *Ludwik XVI*, pp. 201–202; A. Soboul, *op. cit.*, pp. 55–56.

Salm frankly informed him about a difficult situation of the Republic. As at that time only the Dutch were interested in negotiations with France and Prussia, the problem of the subsidy treaty had not been solved. The court of Versailles was strongly opposed to the idea of the Swedish-Dutch agreement. Thus, Karl von Salm-Grumbach came to Paris to obtain the consent of the French ministry to finalise negotiations on the subsidy treaty between Sweden and the Republic of the United Provinces. A few days later Gustav III sent further instructions to his Ambassador to the court of Versailles. This time he informed him that the leaders of the republican party would demand from the court of Versailles a military support against the orangists. Therefore, the Swedish king wanted to be informed about everything that the rheingraf was going to do in Paris. Staël was also ordered to ask the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Armand Marc, Count of Montmorin, what steps he intended to take, if a civil war in Holland broke out. In mid-April 1787 Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein, anticipating orders of his court, had a long conversation with the French Minister of Foreign Affairs. He explained to him Sweden's motives for seeking an agreement with Holland. Montmorin approved the negotiations but advised against using the rheingraf's mediation. He also said that the court of Versailles had just sent a special agent to Holland to investigate the situation in that country. During the next several days the Swedish diplomat conducted an extensive interview on the identity of the Dutch negotiator. He found out that Rhiengraf Karl Ludwig von Salm-Grumbach enjoyed the confidence and support of Charles de Vergennes and Charles Alexandre de Calonne. The new minister, Armand Marc de Montmorin, also spoke well of him. However, Staël seemed to doubt whether the rheingraf still had an influence on decisions made by the court of Versailles on the Dutch affairs. His guidelines on a policy towards Holland had not brought anything good to France so far²³.

On May 10, 1787 Staël von Holstein wrote to Gustav III about his conversation with Gerard Brantsen, the Ambassador of Holland to the court of Versailles. The latter assured him that the rheingraf's travel to Paris was not certainly connected with efforts to obtain the support of the French troops. After that conversation the Swedish diplomat came to a conclusion that the authority of the Rheingraf von Salm-Grumbach in France was solely based on the belief that he was an influential figure in the Republic. Yet, his influence in Holland was based only on the local government's assumptions that he enjoyed the confidence of the French court. On May 20 Staël wrote that

²³ See Gustav III to E.M. Staël v. Holstein, Stockholm, March 23 and April 13, 1787, RA, Huvudarkivet, Kabinettet/UD, B1B, vol. 118; E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, April 19 and May 6, 1787, *ibidem*, Gallica vol. 470; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 52, 55–56.

the outbreak of a civil war in Holland seemed to be inevitable. He also predicted that some kind of a foreign intervention in the internal affairs could be soon expected in that country. The situation in the Republic of the United Provinces was becoming more and more dangerous indeed. The supporters of the House of Orange, the aristocrats and the democrats had been fighting each other there for some time. Then, conservative forces began to focus around the person of Stadtholder William V. The British envoy to the Hague, James Harris, eagerly started to establish a party of Orange which aim was to undermine the French influence in the country. Armed conflicts between the orangists and the patriots, who supported France, began to erupt. Both sides resorted to acts of terror as well. The court of Berlin was also interested in the developments in Holland. On June 10, 1787 Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein wrote to Gustav III that Frederick William II was following Dutch events with interest because of his bounds with the Family of Orange. The Swedish diplomat was worried that the court of Versailles did nothing to stop the English and the Prussian influence in the Republic. Brantsen also did not believe that France would openly intervene in Holland. Staël wrote to Stockholm that in Brantsen's opinion the court of Versailles should immediately send to the Hague a new diplomat who would fix mistakes made by the former representative of France in the Republic, Charles Olivier, Marquis of Vérac and the late Minister of Foreign Affairs, Vergennes. In his next message, the Swedish ambassador informed Gustav III that if any foreign power did not interfere in the Dutch civil war, France would stay neutral in the conflict. He still hoped, though, that the expected return of Emperor Joseph II from Russia and rumours that some of Dutch provinces intended to ask England for help would force the cabinet of Versailles to more vigorous actions. At the same time clearly agitated Gustav III sent new instructions to his representative in Paris. He wrote that the stadtholder had already declared an open war against the patriotic party. Staël was ordered to persuade Montmorin that the French government should aim at finalising negotiations of the King of Sweden with the Dutch as soon as possible. Gustav III was still willing to send six thousand soldiers to help the patriotic party, provided that the subsidy treaty would be signed. Thus, at the end of June Staël von Holstein presented to Montmorin a draft of the Swedish-Dutch treaty and a proposal to send six thousand Swedish soldiers to the Republic. The idea got, however, a cold reception from the French minister. The reason for that seemed quite obvious. In the same message, the Swedish diplomat wrote that there appeared a possibility of a peaceful solution to the Dutch crisis. The court of Versailles decided to persuade the Dutch to accept a mediation of Emperor Joseph II. Staël was quite sceptical of that solution. He claimed

that the mediation of the emperor would be possible only if the proposal was approved by England and Prussia²⁴.

In early July 1787 Staël von Holstein wrote about the uncertainty of the position of Prussia towards Holland and maritime armaments of England. The ambassador complained about the lack of energy in the cabinet of Versailles where each minister was a sovereign ruler in his own department. The Swedish diplomat also predicted that France would do nothing to safeguard its influence in Holland. The Archbishop of Toulouse, who was facing growing internal difficulties, would try to avoid war. According to Staël, Loménie de Brienne did not believe that thanks to the war he might obtain a force he did not find in his own character. The ambassador complained on that occasion on both, the prime minister and the French nation. For him, they had no perseverance and were persistent in the belief that great political benefits could be achieved without any sacrifices. On July 12, 1787 Staël wrote to the king about his last conversation with Montmorin. During that meeting he mentioned once again the issue of the Swedish-Dutch subsidy treaty. The French Minister of Foreign Affairs remained sceptical about the idea. He stated that six thousand Swedish soldiers in the Dutch service could be a convenient excuse for England to come in defence of the stadtholder. Those arguments seemed reasonable to the Swedish diplomat. Yet, he assured the king that he would do all possible to persuade France to support the alliance so wished by the court of Stockholm. In late July Staël von Holstein warned Gustav III that, despite peaceful declarations of the British cabinet, the Anglo-French war might break out at any time. Montmorin seemed to be of good cheer, though. He still thought that the Dutch case may be settled peacefully. At the beginning of August it was believed in Paris that it was possible to avoid both, the English and the Prussian intervention in Holland. Staël, however, did not approve of methods used by the cabinet of Versailles. He wrote that France, in order to maintain its influence in the Republic of the United Provinces, involved in its actions fanatics from the patriotic party. That could lead to the war France was so eager to avoid²⁵.

In August 1787 the Swedish ambassador was still interested in the Dutch case. After his discussions with Montmorin he drew the conclusion that the Minister of Foreign Affairs did not treat Frederick William II as a threat to Holland. The cabinet of Versailles did not have any plans in case of the

²⁴ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, May 10, 20 and June 10, 14, 28, 1787, RA, Gallica vol. 470; Gustav III to E.M. Staël v. Holstein, Stockholm, June 15, 1787, *ibidem*, Huvudarkivet, Kabinettet/UD, B1B, vol. 118. See also J. Balicki, M. Bogucka, *Historia Holandii*, Wrocław 1976, pp. 261–262; J. Godechot, *France and the Atlantic Revolution of Eighteenth Century 1770–1799*, London 1971, pp. 56–60; *idem*, *La prise...*, pp. 47–51.

²⁵ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, July 5, 8, 12, 26 and August 2, 1787, RA, Gallica vol. 470; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 59–60, 62.

Prussian intervention in the Republic. Staël von Holstein dubiously accepted Montmorin's pronouncements who assured Gerard Brantsen that France would help Dutch patriots if they were attacked by Prussia. In the same month, Gustav III ordered his ambassador to begin negotiations on signing the Swedish-French trade treaty. The ruler of Sweden wanted to get additional subsidies from the court of Versailles as well. He also insisted on Staël's finalising talks with the Dutch as soon as possible. Thus, on August 19, Staël von Holstein wrote to the king that he spoke with Montmorin once again. The minister again refused to support the court of Stockholm's efforts to successfully conclude agreements with the Republic of the United Provinces. It did not prevent him, however, from blaming the Dutch crisis for the inability to pay additional subsidies to Sweden. In mid-September 1787 Staël informed the court of Stockholm that François Emmanuel de Saint-Priest, a new French diplomat, was sent to Holland. The ambassador asked Montmorin to tell him to accelerate signing the Swedish-Dutch treaty. He also spoke to Saint-Priest. Yet, he requested of him something different than of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. He did not know whether the outbreak of the Turkish war had not caused any changes in Gustav III's policy. Therefore, he asked the French diplomat to suspend negotiations on sending six thousand Swedish soldiers to Holland until the arrival of new orders from Stockholm. After his recent talks with Montmorin and Saint-Priest Staël, who earlier had been sceptical about statements of both French diplomats, came to the conclusion that France would send its troops to Holland if its territory was to be invaded by the Prussians. As it turned out, that observation was premature and not justified²⁶.

A few days later Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein began negotiations with Montmorin on the matter of the French-Swedish trade agreement and he submitted an official note on it. He tried to convince the minister of the benefits the right to store goods in Gothenburg would offer France. Montmorin was busy with other things and he did not want to start the talks, though. In such a situation, Staël addressed the Archbishop of Toulouse directly. The latter, in turn, promised to consult it with experts on trade and navy. The French ministry did not have neither time nor desire to begin new negotiations with the court of Stockholm. In the meantime, the situation in Holland had further complicated. The threat of a foreign intervention in the internal affairs of the Republic became more real. Montmorin tried to prevent it. He sent a courier to London with a warning that should the King of Prussia enter Holland, France would defend it. However, the French *démarche* lacked firmness and determination. At the same time, the minister assured the British

²⁶ See Gustav III to E.M. Staël v. Holstein, Drottningholm, August 1, 1787, RA, Huvudarkivet, Kabinettet/UD, B1B, vol. 118; E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, August 9, 19 and September 13, 16, 1787, *ibidem*, Gallica, vol. 470; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 62–63, 65–66, 68–69.

that he desired to maintain friendly relations between the two courts. When the Swedish ambassador was informing the court of Stockholm about steps taken by Montmorin in London, the latter ones were already late. Wilhelmine, the stadtholder's wife, was stopped by a unit of Dutch patriots while trying to return from Nijmegen to the Hague. That event was for her brother, Frederick William II, a convenient excuse to intervene in the internal affairs of the Republic of the United Provinces. On September 13, 1787, 25 thousand Prussian soldiers crossed the border. As they did not encounter much resistance along their way, they moved in the direction of the Hague and Amsterdam. Ten days later, on September 23, Staël von Holstein informed his lord that Prussian troops had marched to Holland. Certainly, to its great surprise, the court of Stockholm also discovered that the French government had done nothing to help opponents of the House of Orange in the Republic of the United Provinces. Staël could have expected such an attitude of Versailles. The Dutch ambassador, Gerard Brantsen, had told him earlier in the greatest secrecy that French troops could not be sent to the Republic before two months. In that situation, the Swedish diplomat came to the conclusion that the Dutch would have to give in to threats and thus, the stadtholder would return to the Hague soon and would be restored to all his rights and privileges. This time predictions of the Swedish ambassador turned out to be the most reasonable. Already on September 27 he informed Gustav III that a courier from London had arrived with an English answer to the French declaration on Holland. The British threatened to speed up their armaments if French troops were to enter the Republic. According to Staël, an answer of the court of London caused great consternation at Versailles. The government was afraid of the war. The public opinion was accusing it of weakness and inconsistency and demanded to give assistance to Dutch patriots. The Swedish diplomat also believed that Holland, once again united under the stadtholder's governments, would thank the court of Versailles for the interest in its affairs and would easily demonstrate no need for its further assistance. In last of his September messages Staël wrote that both, the Archbishop of Toulouse and Montmorin regretted the developments in Holland. However, their concern about Dutch affairs seemed to end on that. When the Swedish diplomat tried to explain to the archbishop how bad was the impression France's weakness made on Europe, he light heartedly put all the blame for the Dutch crisis on the mistakes of the previous administration. After that conversation Staël came to the conclusion that in the Dutch case a full capitulation of the French court should be expected. The government would even stop its military armaments if it found out that England had no hostile intents²⁷.

²⁷ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, September 20, 23, 27 (and the apostille to the message) and 30, 1787, RA, Gallica vol. 470; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 69–70, 74–75. See also J. Balicki, M. Bogucka, *op. cit.*, p. 262; E. Rostworowski, *op. cit.*, p. 871.

At the beginning of October 1787 Staël von Holstein informed Gustav III that a close friend of William Pitt, Baron William Wyndham Grenville, came to Paris to convince the French people that England would not declare war to them if they did not send their troops to Holland. The Swedish diplomat also wrote to the king that he was trying to use the current crisis as a pretext to draw the French government's attention to a commercial treaty with Sweden. Two days later, however, Staël wrote about the departure of Lord Grenville from the French capital. After the talks with him the French ministry confirmed its belief that the British were ready for a war. Thus, an experienced Admiral, Pierre François Bailli de Suffren, was appointed a commander of the French fleet. Saint-Priest, who had not even reached the Hague and returned to Paris, was convinced of the inevitability of the Anglo-French war too. In that situation, the French cabinet had discretely inquired Staël on the Swedish possible reaction to the outbreak of the conflict. The ambassador avoided giving a clear answer to the question and sent to Stockholm his own opinion on the matter. He stated that the attitude of France towards Holland should urge the court of Stockholm to be very cautious. He also emphasised commercial benefits Sweden could get if it remained neutral in the conflict that could easily turn into a universal war. In other words, he advised the king not to hurry with an answer and wait for further developments. At the same time, Baron Schultz von Ascheraden arrived in Paris. As a former envoy to the Hague, he was undoubtedly well informed in Dutch affairs and could give Gustav III some wise advice in that regard. Yet, in his first message sent to Stockholm on October 7, 1787 there was only given information on the current mood of the French public opinion. Schultz prepared that message on the basis of press reports. He wrote that Frederick William II was ready to withdraw his troops from Holland if he received reimbursement of the expenses of the whole expedition. In such a situation France, which did nothing to support its followers in the Republic, was eagerly waiting for the Prussian decision on the withdrawal of its troops and a cessation of the English maritime armaments. According to Schultz von Ascheraden, many people in Paris believed that the cabinet of Versailles would make all possible concessions to England and the court of St. James was well aware of it. Schultz reports also included information on the refugees coming to France from Holland. The Swedish diplomat wrote that the leaders of the patriotic party, who had given no resistance to Prussian troops, tried mainly to justify their escape from the country. At that time, Staël von Holstein did not support a view on a total retreat of the court of Versailles. On October 11 he wrote to Gustav III that, judging by the rapidity of French armaments, the court of Versailles had already decided to eventually start a war with England. It only expected further news from London that should help to make an

ultimate decision in that case. According to the Swedish ambassador, French efforts were far too late and nothing could be done to help the patriotic party in the Republic of the United Provinces. In mid-October Staël finally received Montmorin's official response to the Swedish-French trade treaty. It became obvious that although France was satisfied with the proposals submitted to it, it wanted to sign the treaty in a more convenient moment. The court of Stockholm's attempt to strengthen economic and political ties with France turned to be a complete failure. It should be mentioned here that also a representative of the court of Versailles in Stockholm noticed the danger of weakening the alliance between France and Sweden. It was Jean de Gaussen, a *chargé d'affaires*, who was replacing Ambassador Louis Marc, Marquis of Pons. The latter was then on holiday. In his message from October 7, 1787 Gaussen warned the Minister of Foreign Affairs in those words: "If France does not sustain the Dutch case at the moment, what is the omen for other allies!". The French *chargé d'affaires* knew that Gustav III would be able to draw appropriate conclusions from the Dutch crisis²⁸.

The court of Stockholm still hoped, however, that France would finally decide to support Dutch allies. Staël von Holstein nourished those hopes by writing in his letters that the outbreak of the Franco-British war was still possible. He informed in his reports that in case of an armed conflict between two countries, England would be supported by the King of Prussia and Spain would take France's side. At the end of October 1787 William Eden arrived in Paris. He presented a proposal of a peaceful settlement of the dispute. He was very well received by the Archbishop of Toulouse who assured him that France had never intended to intervene militarily in Holland. France would cease reinforcements as soon as the King of Prussia fulfilled his promise and withdrew his troops from the Republic. Pleased Eden left for London. The court of Versailles anxiously waited for the British answer and continued armaments in all ports. Staël disapproved of the cabinet of Versailles' actions. According to him, weakness showed during the Dutch crisis was one of its greatest mistakes. In his opinion, it could lead to the complete loss of French influences in Holland. At the beginning of November 1787 the Swedish ambassador received from Eden three documents which related directly to the Dutch crisis and described previous negotiations between the court of London and the court of Versailles. The first one was a declaration of London court that asked the French ministry whether it intended to send its troops to Holland, as it was stated in a note handed on September 17, 1787 to the British government by François Barthélemy, an envoy of the Most

²⁸ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, October 5, 7, 11 and 14, 1787, RA, Gallica vol. 470; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 75–76; C.G. Schultz v. Ascheraden to Gustav III, Paris, October 7, 1787, RA, Gallica vol. 498; J. de Gaussen to A.M. de Montmorin, Stockholm, October 7, 1787 as cited in A. Söderhjelm, *op. cit.*, pp. 58–59. See also *ibidem*, pp. 56–58; *Repertorium*, p. 136.

Christian King. The second document was Montmorin's counter declaration which assured the British of a desire to preserve friendship and maintain peace. The French Minister of Foreign Affairs stated there that a question of sending French troops to Holland ceased to be valid after a withdrawal of Prussian troops. Finally, the third document was the British-French declaration signed on October 27 at Versailles. It stated that both sides came to an agreement and ceased armaments started due to the Dutch crisis. On November 5, 1787 Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein informed Gustav III that the French government finally admitted to the failure and was willing to forgive Prussia and England their intervention in Holland. In the same message, Staël reported rumours on the concept of an alliance between Russia, Austria, France and Spain that was to offset the projected alliance between England, Prussia, Saxony and other German princes. In the following weeks the Swedish ambassador, as expected, recorded further signs of France losing its influence in the Republic of the United Provinces. Montmorin complained to Staël that on November 11, 1787 he had been informed about four thousand Prussian soldiers left in Holland from where they should have been withdrawn according to earlier promises. It is also worth mentioning that at the same time the court of Versailles once again declined to discuss economic issues with Sweden. On October 26 Staël von Holstein handed Montmorin a note in which he requested to equalise rights of the Swedish and the British merchants. Under the trade agreement of 1786 the British merchants could bring to France goods the trade of which was forbidden for the Swedish merchants, subjects of the long-time and most faithful French ally. On November 14, 1787 the Swedish ambassador received an evasive answer from Montmorin who stated that Swedish wishes would be soon considered by French experts. On November 22 Staël sent a reply of the Minister of Foreign Affairs to Stockholm. However, another breach in the Swedish-French relations seemed to be unnoticed. Gustav III was mainly interested in the developments in the international arena and only that kind of information from Paris was important to him. At the beginning of December it was prematurely announced in the French capital that an alliance treaty between Holland, England and Prussia had been signed. It was also said that the Prince of Orange was to be proclaimed the King of Holland. France, however, neither intended to nor could in any way affect the further course of events in the Republic. The court of Versailles declared that it felt released from its obligations because of the Dutch dual treaty with England and Prussia. Thus, at the end of 1787 the Dutch crisis was finally prevented. Holland emerged from it as a weak and exhausted by the civil war country with limited sovereignty. The French government showed great weakness and suffered severe humiliation both, at home and internationally. The most disappointed,

however, was Gustav III. The Dutch catastrophe and the loss of influence by the patriotic party did not allow to sign the Swedish-Dutch alliance. The realisation of a dream on playing a prominent political role in Europe once again had to be postponed²⁹.

FRANCE AND SWEDEN TOWARDS THE RUSSO-TURKISH WAR

At the time the above-mentioned events were occurring, a new conflict was growing in the East. Since the second conference in Ainali Kawak there was a persistent tension in the Russian-Turkish relations. Turkey, which had never accepted the loss of Crimea, was preoccupied by the growing Russian influence in the Caucasus and the Balkans. The court of sultan was also aware of Catherine II's expansion plans. Those plans were well known in Paris too. On March 15, 1787 Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein wrote to Gustav III about an intended voyage of Catherine II to Crimea. In his opinion, the empress aimed at putting into practice the old Greek plan and, therefore, prepared for a war with Turkey. Staël also wrote that Grigory Potemkin urged the ruler of Russia to begin the siege of Ochakov. The Swedish diplomat came to the conclusion that if Russia, supported by Austria, was to start a war with the Turks in the near future, France would not be able to defend the Ottoman Empire. A few days later the ambassador informed in his message that the possibility of the outbreak of the Russo-Turkish war was loudly discussed in Paris. According to Staël von Holstein, in France's situation it would be a disaster both, to become involved in the conflict and remain neutral. Thus, the main concern of the court of Versailles was how to prevent the further increase of Russia's influence in the Mediterranean and stop expansionist aspirations of Austria. In mid-April 1787 the Swedish diplomat learnt from Montmorin that France had asked Emperor Joseph II to take steps to prevent the outbreak of the Russo-Turkish war. It was promised to the ruler of Austria that all allied obligations would be fulfilled in case his relations with the court of St. Petersburg were to deteriorate because of his actions. Although a definite answer had not come from Vienna yet, it was expected it would be satisfactory. The Swedish ambassador was sceptical about the possibility of the French politics in the East being activated. He reminded his ruler about France's enormous financial problems and repeated once

²⁹ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, October 21, 25, 28 and November 1, 4 (with three enclosures to the message), 5, 11 and 22 (with two enclosures to the message) and December 2, 1787, RA, Gallica vol. 470. See also C.T. Odhner, *Sveriges politiska historia under konung Gustaf III:s regering*, vol. II (1779–1787), Stockholm 1896, p. 529; Z. Anusik, *Dwór sztokholmski wobec wydarzeń w Holandii w latach 1785–1787*, in: *Gdańsk – Polska – Europa. Praca zbiorowa ofiarowana profesorowi doktorowi habilitowanemu Władysławowi Zajewskiemu w siedemdziesiątą rocznicę urodzin*, Z. Kropidłowski (ed.), Gdańsk 2001, pp. 87–101.

again that the advisers of Louis XVI hid from him the true state of affairs. The only consolation for the French ministry was the belief that the Turks would not be attacked until the next year. Staël did not expect any vigorous action from the Minister of Foreign Affairs, either. In his opinion, Montmorin was a man who preferred the authority without fame than the fame without authority. In June 1787 the ambassador again informed Gustav III of Montmorin's fears that Russia could attack Turkey. Surprisingly, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs still did not know what to do to avert the danger that was threatening the Ottomans³⁰.

In the meantime, the situation in the East had further complicated. In the spring and summer of 1787 the southern Russian provinces were triumphantly visited for inspection by Catherine II. In Kherson she met with Emperor Joseph II. However, both rulers' plans of the partition of the Ottoman Empire were still very vague. The Turks had far too many reasons for concern, though. In August 1787, three months after the meeting of the imperial couple, the Porte surprised Russia with a declaration of war and attacked it on land and sea. Although information on the outbreak of the Russo-Turkish war had arrived to Paris after several weeks, from the beginning of September Staël's messages were completely dominated by the Turkish case. The outbreak of the Russo-Turkish war seemed inevitable to the ambassador. He did not know what steps to take and, thus, demanded new instructions from his court. The French were also surprised and did not know how to react to the Turkish ultimatum sent to the court of St. Petersburg. The cabinet of Versailles did not want to take any steps without consulting the court of Vienna. Therefore, a courier from Vienna was eagerly expected in Paris. Montmorin made a solemn promise to Staël that he would notify him immediately of the French ministry's decision. According to the Swedish ambassador, the cabinet of Versailles was too weak to take appropriate steps. Yet, Staël noticed the fact that deciding on the Turkish case was very difficult for the court of Versailles. On the one hand, French political and commercial interests had to be taken into consideration. On the other hand, one should keep in mind increasingly difficult internal affairs and an inconvenient alliance with Austria. In Staël's opinion, a military intervention in Turkey required strength that the Royal Council lacked of. On September 27, 1787 Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein asked Montmorin whether the Turks might expect from France the same support the Dutch had received. The minister replied that it was quite unlikely but he would not make any decision before the arrival of the courier from St. Petersburg with Russian explanations. The Swedish diplomat, unsatisfied with that response, asked the same question to the

³⁰ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, March 15, 22 and April 19, 26, 29 and May 6 and June 20, 1787, RA, Gallica vol. 470; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 46–48, 52–56.

Archbishop of Toulouse. He reminded him that Gustav III was the closest ally of the court of Versailles and had all rights to be informed about French intentions on the Turkish case. He received an answer that an arrival of a courier from St. Petersburg was awaited. He was also assured of a friendly attitude of the French ministry towards Sweden. It was promised to him that he would be informed about everything that concerned the case. Finally, Loménie de Brienne asked Staël to reassure Gustav III that he could always count on France which would remain his reliable and faithful ally³¹.

In October 1787, after another conversation with Montmorin, Staël came to the conclusion that France did not intend to provide any support to Turkey. On the contrary, it would try to ally with Austria and Russia and somehow benefit from the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Although the Archbishop of Toulouse denied that France had come to an agreement with the imperial courts, the Swedish diplomat did not believe in his assurances. Loménie de Brienne explained himself to him that the court of Versailles would not be able to support the Ottomans until the end of its conflict with England and Prussia. For the time being, the French ministry sent orders to its envoys to St. Petersburg, Vienna and Constantinople. They were told to do everything possible as to persuade the sultan and the imperial courts to start negotiations on most contentious issues. On November 11 the Swedish ambassador wrote to Gustav III that he had spoken to Montmorin once again. The minister promised him that France would not take any steps without consulting its plans with Sweden. He would do everything to prevent the downfall of the Ottoman Empire. However, Montmorin was concerned with an unexpected activity of Prussia and England and their sudden interest in the Turkish case. During that meeting Staël warned the French minister against leaving Turkey to its fate. In his opinion, it could lead to unpredictable consequences in the international arena. Staël von Holstein followed instructions of his court as well. Thus, he presented to the Archbishop of Toulouse Gustav III's unspecified solution of the Turkish problem. He tried to convince Loménie de Brienne that the ruler of Sweden, an ally of Turkey and a neighbour of Russia, had every reason to be interested in that conflict. Four days later Staël wrote to the king that he had gone to Versailles again and tried to persuade the archbishop and Montmorin to adopt the Stockholm court's plan. The Swedish ambassador anticipated that it would be a difficult task, as Marie Antoinette strongly supported the imperial courts' position and was talking Louis XVI out of taking active steps in the defence of Turkey. In such a situation, Staël talked to Eden and tried to convince him of the need of the British court's support for the Turks. He declared to him that an

³¹ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, September 6, 9, 13, 16, 27 (and the apostille to the message) and 30, 1787, RA, Gallica vol. 470; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 72–74. See also E. Rostworowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 698–699.

alliance with France did not exclude the possibility of a future rapprochement between Sweden and the United Kingdom. On November 17, 1787 Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein once again went to Versailles to discuss with the Archbishop of Toulouse the plan presented to the court of Versailles by Gustav III. According to Staël, the archbishop was amazed at the size of the project. Yet, he did not intend to become involved in its implementation. He asked for more time to think and promised to consult with Gustav III all steps taken in the Turkish case. Thanks to that conversation the Swedish diplomat had the opportunity to notice that Loménie de Brienne counted on an alliance with the emperor very much. It was to facilitate French actions in the Turkish case. Staël wanted to convince him of the unreality of such a position, but his arguments did not find favour in the eyes of the archbishop. Staël talked to Montmorin the same day. He learnt from him that the French Ambassador to Istanbul, Marie Gabriel, Count of Choiseul-Gouffier, sent a formal complaint on the Swedish envoy to the Turkish capital, Gerhard Johan von Heidenstam. The latter, together with the British and the Prussian envoys, was to dissuade the Turks from the adoption of French peace proposals. Staël von Holstein zealously defended his colleague from Istanbul. He also asked Montmorin whether it was true that France urged Turkey to make peace at the expense of new concessions and sacrifices. Montmorin denied but he failed to convince his interlocutor. It is interesting that in mid-November 1787 rumours were spread in Paris, denied by Staël, that the King of Sweden had declared war on Russia. On November 25, in his message to Gustav III, Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein harshly assessed France's foreign policy. His predictions for the future were pessimistic. The talks with the Archbishop of Toulouse and the Minister of Foreign Affairs confirmed him that the court of Versailles would sacrifice Turkey for the benefits offered by the imperial courts or simply the need to maintain peace and deal with its own affairs³².

In December 1787 Staël was seriously ill. He had an attack of gout and could not leave his home. Thus, Montmorin paid him a visit and once again assured him that France wished to consult its Turkish policy with Gustav III. The ambassador did not believe that it was possible for the French court to bring peace between Turkey and Russia. For him, it was another sign of the cabinet of Versailles' weakness. In the middle of the month, as ordered by Gustav III, Staël submitted to the French ministry a memorandum and demanded answers to three questions concerning the Turkish policy. First of all, to what extent was France interested in the Turkish case? Secondly,

³² See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, October 21, 25 and November 11, 15, 18 and 25, 1787, RA, Gallica vol. 470; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 76–77. Sir Robert Sharpe Ainslie and Heinrich Friedrich von Diez were the British and the Prussian representatives in Istanbul mentioned by Staël von Holstein. See *Repertorium*, pp. 179, 341.

how did France intend to combine an alliance with Austria with its liabilities to the other ally, Turkey? And finally, if France (for various reasons) was not able to support Turkey, would it be possible it would ask the King of Sweden to take all possible steps and serve Turkey in the way he was obliged to on the basis of the treaty of 1740? On December 23, 1787 Montmorin prepared a response to the Swedish memorandum. He cautiously presented his negative view and stated that he would consider all questions posed by Gustav III. He once again promised to inform the Stockholm court about his intentions towards Turkey. Yet, the real opinion of the French Minister of Foreign Affairs on that issue was presented in a note prepared by him on December 16, 1787. He wrote there about Gustav III: "And at the same time he asks us, through his ambassador, ridiculous questions that demonstrate his great desire to take part, at any price, in events to be arisen from the East war". Later he also added that: "We regretfully see that a ruler, who should deal with matters of his own country, wants to interfere with issues that should remain remote to him. It is feared too that his actions will make the Empress of Russia believe that he is wrong-minded towards her". Yet, during the meeting with Staël von Holstein Montmorin once again assured him of his friendship and France's dedication to the interests of Sweden. The ambassador, however, wrote to Stockholm that in case of the conflict between Sweden and Russia, one should not count on a vigorous support of France. The cabinet of Versailles would only use its diplomacy and would try to maintain good relations with Sweden. Nothing more should be expected of France at that moment. At the end of December 1787 Staël reported rumours on the possibility of concluding the quadruple alliance of France, Spain and the imperial courts. In his opinion, Montmorin was not convinced of the idea. The Minister of Foreign Affairs did not hesitate to assure the Swedish diplomat once again that France would do everything to save Turkey. Staël noticed, however, that *bona officia* would not stop the Russian army that was much stronger than Turkish troops³³.

On January 8, 1788 Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein came to the conclusion that in the near future an alliance between the imperial courts and the courts of Bourbon was possible. In his opinion, the quadruple alliance would be signed if the Triple Alliance of England, Prussia and Holland was created. According to the Swedish diplomat, it was difficult to find out true intentions of the court of Versailles. It had been willing to make an agreement with Russia for a long time. On the other hand, it desired to maintain good relations

³³ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, December 13, 20 and 28, 1787 (with two enclosures to the last message), RA, Gallica vol. 470. The message from December 28 arrived to Stockholm on January 12, 1788. Gustav III's memorandum with three questions to the French court was sent from Stockholm on December 6, 1787 and reached Paris before December 16. Its content is also cited in A. Söderhjelm, *op. cit.*, p. 67. Montmorin's note see *ibidem*, pp. 67–68.

with England as well. What is more, France could not let the House of Austria strengthen its position. According to Staël, the cabinet of Versailles had to make a really difficult and complex decision. The Swedish ambassador was informed by a person with connections in Russia that in 1787 the Russian military offensive against the Turks was impeded by three obstacles. Firstly, the court of St. Petersburg had financial troubles and it was difficult for it to obtain funds for the war Russia was not prepared for. Secondly, there were high prices of goods in the southern Russian provinces and small amount of food insufficient to supply the army's needs. Finally, Russia had great difficulties in finding a way to attack Turkey from the sea and shifting its squadron to the Mediterranean Sea. Staël's informer also claimed that Russia did not trust Austria and feared that the emperor would start separate negotiations with the Porte. The court of St. Petersburg worried about the attitude of England too, as it could start to defend the *status quo* in the Levant at any moment. Staël von Holstein, however, was convinced that Russia wanted to maintain good relations with Britain because of trade connections with that country. The trade with England gave Russians an annual income of ten million pounds. As for the prospects of the British policy, the Swedish diplomat stated that the British were seriously considering the possibility of limiting trade with Russia and replacing it with trade with Sweden and other Baltic countries that could provide products imported so far from Russia. Yet, the British government supported the Russians. When the court of Madrid objected to the Russian squadron's entry to the Mediterranean Sea, the British were to offer their support to the St. Petersburg court. However, the Russian attitude towards the British cabinet was definitely hostile. Staël claimed that the Russian Ambassador to London, Semyon R. Vorontsov, would like to overthrow William Pitt and replace him with Charles Fox who would be more susceptible to St. Petersburg court's suggestions. A few days later Staël von Holstein was assured that the Prussian court had asked France what position it intended to take on the Turkish case. The Prussians had not received any reply so far. The Count of Montmorin was very mysterious about his plans. Staël guessed that the real aim of the cabinet of Versailles was to guarantee peace to France when other countries became involved in a new European conflict³⁴.

Predictions of the Swedish diplomat soon proved to be good. The conflict in the East further expanded. On the night from December 2nd to 3rd, 1787 Austrian troops made an unsuccessful attempt to occupy Belgrade. That attack, carried out without a formal declaration of war, dishonoured Joseph II and made him declare war on the sultan. Although the war was

³⁴ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, January 8 and 13, 1788, RA, Gallica vol. 471; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, p. 81.

officially declared on February 9, 1788, all European capitals had known about emperor's intentions much earlier. Carl Gustaf Schultz von Ascheraden wrote in his messages dated January 17 and January 21, 1788 that Paris learnt about the fact that Austria had declared a war on the Turkish sultan. In his opinion, it meant that the French policy failed and the concept of the alliance of Vienna, St. Petersburg and Versailles collapsed. The French ministry's efforts to bring peace to the East proved to be useless. On January 31 Staël von Holstein wrote that the French still hoped that they would persuade the Turks to make peace. According to him, it was quite extraordinary that at a time when the whole Europe was preoccupied with one of the biggest crises in the international arena, France remained stoically calm. In the same message, the ambassador wrote that Montmorin had a conference with William Eden, the British Ambassador to Paris, John Frederick Sackville, Duke of Dorset and the Prussian envoy, Bernhard Wilhelm von der Goltz. He predicted, however, that nothing would come of it because the cabinet of Versailles would not risk any actions that required strength and energy. According to him, the only aim of the meeting was to alarm the diplomatic corps. Schultz von Ascheraden perceived the matter slightly differently. On February 5, 1788 he wrote to Gustav III that it was believed in Paris that the king would not remain a passive observer of events, if reports on Austria's declaration of war on Turkey were confirmed. In his opinion, the court of Berlin had already notified France of its position on the matter. Schultz also suspected that the French ministry would try to convince the emperor to terminate hostilities against Turkey. On February 10 Staël von Holstein informed the court of Stockholm that Montmorin had sent a new courier to St. Petersburg. The ambassador came to a conclusion that there were orders for Louis Philippe, Count of Ségur to work on the further strengthening of the Russian-French friendship. At the same time, the French diplomat was to persuade Catherine II to be moderate in her claims to Turkey, if France made the Porte begin peace negotiations. Staël was also convinced that the French representative in Istanbul, the Count of Choiseul-Gouffier, was authorised to take any action to overthrow the Grand Vizier. At the end of the quoted message he stated that the cabinet of Versailles had adopted Montmorin's plan. The count wanted peace for Turkey but a peace made at the expense of new concessions and sacrifices towards its neighbours³⁵.

Last reports of the Swedish ambassador were partly confirmed by Carl Gustaf Schultz von Ascheraden. In his message dated February 21, 1788 he wrote to Stockholm that there was no chance that France would directly or

³⁵ See C.G. Schultz v. Ascheraden to Gustav III, Paris, January 17, 21 and February 5, 1788, RA, Gallica vol. 498; E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, January 31 and February 10, 1788, *ibidem*, Gallica vol. 471; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, p. 82. See also W. Kalinka, *Sejm Czteroletni*, 5th ed., vol. I, part 1, Kraków 1895, pp. 28–29.

indirectly defend Turkey. On the same day, Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein informed the court of Stockholm that the Austrian ambassador, François, Count of Mercy-Argenteau, received a message that the emperor had declared war on Turkey. Although it was expected for a long time, the news unpleasantly surprised the cabinet of Versailles. Staël also reported a rumour that France had promised to Russia not to interfere in its dealings with Turkey. The message was unbelievable to the Swedish diplomat, so he decided to wait for its confirmation. On March 3, 1788 Schultz von Ascheraden wrote that in his opinion emperor's spoils of the Turkish war would arouse envy and mistrust on the part of his neighbours, Italian principalities, Prussia and Poland. The cabinet of Versailles seemed to be seriously concerned as well. However, Schultz concluded that the state of French finances would force it to maintain peace and hope that Turkey would not fall under the blows of its enemies without any help from France. Schultz also predicted that if peace was not made immediately after the first campaign, the war would turn into a widespread conflict. The French government hesitated and did not know what to do. It feared for its interests in both, strengthening Russia and wakening Turkey. Schultz von Ascheraden wondered how the attitude of the French government would be affected by the information that the court of Berlin had begun negotiations on the enlargement and consolidation of the German princes' league against the emperor. At the same time Staël von Holstein complained to Gustav III that a courier from Stockholm had not brought him any new orders regarding Turkey. Therefore, he decided that old instructions from October 12, 1787 were still binding. In the same message, Staël informed the king that the French ministry continuously assured him of the court of Versailles' devotion to Swedish interests. Neither the archbishop nor the Minister of Foreign Affairs fulfilled a promise to inform the Swedish ambassador about all steps they had taken in the Turkish case. According to the Swedish diplomat, it was caused by growing internal problems. The government was not able to maintain its current international position and behaved in a way unworthy of a superpower. Staël also claimed that French ministers had already got used to both, their weakness and methods they had to resort to while conducting foreign policy³⁶.

As the international situation became serious and the eastern war expanded, Gustav III demanded from his representatives in Paris an accurate information on the state of French armed forces. It seems that even at the beginnings of 1788 the King of Sweden underestimated the crisis France had recently suffered from. Thus, he believed that sooner or later France would be forced to take more decisive steps in defence of the Ottoman Empire.

³⁶ See C.G. Schultz v. Ascheraden to Gustav III, Paris, February 21 and March 3, 1788, RA, Gallica vol. 498; E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, February 21 and March 6, 1788, *ibidem*, Gallica vol. 471; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, p. 82.

Baron Schultz von Ascheraden was the main Gustav III's informer on the military matters. According to him, at the beginnings of 1788 the French fleet consisted of 81 ships of the line, 69 frigates, 25 corvettes, 25 avisos and 40 transport ships. At the time 12 ships of the line and six frigates were under construction. They were to be in service within next six months. The Swedish diplomat described the state of the fleet as more than satisfactory. But much worse, in his opinion, was the state of French ground forces. The number of soldiers in troops of the line did not exceed 120 thousand. Schultz was optimistic, however, as a project of the reorganisation of the French army had been presented to Louis XVI. Existing regiments were to be merged into tactical units, divisions. After the reorganisation, the army should consist of 13 French divisions and four foreign divisions. Some formations were to be eliminated, e.g. six regiments of chasseurs. Moreover, 24 companies from those regiments were to be incorporated into regiments of dragoons and three new infantry regiments were to be created from other soldiers. The reformed regiment of cavalry and dragoons was to consist of three squadrons, 160 soldiers each. According to the Swedish diplomat, the reform had not been ready yet. At the beginning of February 1788 the French managed to implement changes only in five regiments of cavalry. It was expected, however, that 18 of the existing 24 regiments of dragoons would remain unchanged. Other six regiments of dragoons together with six regiments of chasseurs would be transformed into 12 regiments of hussars. Hussars were to be organised similarly to all other cavalry units. The carabineers were to consist of two regiments, four squadrons each. A significant redundancy was planned in the units of the military gendarmerie. It was to be limited to four squadrons, 160 soldiers each. The regiments of foot were to be vastly reorganised as well. After the reform the French infantry were to consist of 60 unitary regiments, three battalions each. One infantry regiment was to consist of 2,7 thousand soldiers. Schultz von Ascheraden claimed that a military reform in France was absolutely necessary. In one of his messages he presented a report of the Council of War's Secretary, Jacques, Count of Guibert, who had calculated that the King of France was maintaining 37 thousand officers in active service. It meant that, on the assumption that France had the army of approximately 200 thousand soldiers (in all formations), there was one officer to five privates. For comparison, Schultz quoted data which showed that in the imperial and the Prussian army the proportion was one officer to 40 soldiers. The baron's conclusion was quite optimistic, though. Despite all the difficulties and problems Louis XVI's army had to face, he still regarded it as one of the strongest armies in Europe³⁷.

³⁷ See C.G. Schultz v. Ascheraden to Gustav III, Paris, January 31 and February 7, 20 and 28, 1788, RA, Gallica vol. 498.

Although both Swedish diplomats were convinced of the great potential of the French army, they reminded Gustav III of France's political weakness. On March 20, 1788 Staël von Holstein informed the king that last messages from Vienna suggested that the King of Prussia had demanded from the emperor to stop war with Turkey and had offered his *bona officia* to restore peace. Staël did not know how the cabinet of Versailles had received that news but he could safely assume that it would do nothing that could disturb the peace of France. Also the next message of the Swedish ambassador was quite ironic. On March 27 he wrote that a courier from St. Petersburg brought new proposals of the Russian government. Staël assured Gustav III that he would try to find out what they consisted of. As he usually foresaw in advance what the Minister of Foreign Affairs was going to tell him, he could already inform the king that Montmorin would repeat it would be best for Sweden to remain calm and passively observe events happening near its borders. The ambassador mentioned that problem in his subsequent messages as well. At the beginning of April he informed the king that during his last meeting with Montmorin he had asked him if it was true that the King of Prussia had offered his *bona officia* to the imperial courts as to stop war and restore peace with Turkey. The Minister of Foreign Affairs replied that the Prussian court had expressed a wish to participate in peacemaking with Turkey. However, its actions in St. Petersburg were not decisive enough and thus a positive response from Russia would be unexpected. Staël also learnt that a courier from St. Petersburg brought Ivan M. Simolin an order to persuade France to make its ports available to the Russian fleet that was to be sent to the Mediterranean Sea. Staël von Holstein, alarmed by the prospect of closer Franco-Russian relations, mentioned to Montmorin that the whole Europe was convinced that the court of Versailles had turned to Russia to establish closer cooperation than ever before. The minister denied those rumours. He also repeated that France was trying to restore peace and persuade Catherine II to reduce her claims against Turkey. He also said, however, that if France was compelled to make an alliance with Russia, it would never forget to deal with Swedish matters as if they were its own. On April 10, 1788 Staël wrote that after another conversation with Montmorin he came to the conclusion that the court of Versailles still hoped that through its moderate actions the Turkish war would be brought to the end. It would not use force to achieve that goal, but it was also very far from agreeing on a complete destruction of the Porte. At the same time Carl Gustaf Schultz von Ascheraden wrote about the brochure entitled "Considerations sur la guerre actuelle avec les Turcs, par M. Volney". In his opinion the French ministry was somehow involved in the creation of that book, as the author was passionately justifying the government's conduct with regard to the Turkish

case. Also Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein was convinced that the cabinet of Versailles was behind that publication³⁸.

At the beginning of May 1788 it was commonly believed in Paris that the Franco-Russian relations were becoming closer. Carl Gustaf Schultz von Ascheraden, who was leaving the French capital, registered those rumours and wrote that the French government was using all available means to urge superpowers at war to make peace. The cabinet of Versailles hoped that its *bona officia* would finally produce desired effects and would make the court of St. Petersburg accept its proposals. On May 15 also Staël von Holstein informed the court of Stockholm that in his opinion, the Franco-Russian alliance was to be made soon. He said with a regret to Montmorin that Sweden observed how relations between France and Russia were getting closer and closer. The Minister of Foreign Affairs calmly replied that nothing would change the special nature of the Franco-Swedish relations. He also tried to convince the Swedish diplomat that the Russian-French treaty would be beneficial to Sweden as well. Staël did not share that belief. He anxiously observed Russia's growing influence on the court of Versailles. He also warned Gustav III that the unofficial, but reliable, source had told him that the French ministry had no idea on what its attitude towards Sweden should be. As it feared to lose respect of both, its own and international public opinion, it wanted to both, approach Russia and maintain an old alliance with the court of Stockholm. The ambassador predicted that Montmorin would try to influence Gustav III to act in line with intentions of the cabinet of Versailles. Madame de Boufflers and returning to Sweden the Marquis of Pons were to help him in his plan. However, Staël von Holstein finally concluded that France would not oppose the interests of Gustav III as it was its own interest to maintain friendly relations with Sweden. On May 18, 1788 Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein described to the king his last meeting with the French Minister of Foreign Affairs. He wrote that, in accordance with orders from April 22, he regretted that France intended to support the Russian fleet's activities in the Mediterranean Sea. He also assured the French ministry that the Swedish king remained a faithful ally of both, France and Turkey. Yet, Montmorin once again ignored the Stockholm court's point of view. He replied that France's only objective was to restore peace and avert dangers threatening Turkey. He still hoped that he would finally persuade the imperial courts to be more moderate in their demands towards Turkey. Thus, the Swedish diplomat concluded that Montmorin considered his plan as the best solution for both, France and Turkey. According to Staël, the idea was

³⁸ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, March 20, 27 and April 3, 10, 1788, RA, Gallica vol. 471; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, p. 83; C.G. Schultz v. Ascheraden to Gustav III, Paris, April 11, 1788, RA, Gallica vol. 498.

so well established that all attempts to undermine it would be futile³⁹. In the second half of May 1788 the court of Versailles' position towards the Turkish war was exactly the same as at the beginning of the conflict. It was a serious blow to Gustav III who had already made an irrevocable decision to launch military operations against Russia.

GUSTAV III IN THE YEARS 1787–1788: THE GROWING CONFLICT WITH RUSSIA

After the *Riksdag* of 1786 Gustav III was seeking a conflict with the St. Petersburg court. He needed some time to prepare for war, though. He also had to convince the Swedish public opinion and wait for a favourable moment to invade Catherine II's lands. In the face of the war the King of Sweden decided to strengthen formal and legal position of his closest associates responsible for the foreign policy. Thus, on March 10, 1787 he appointed Ulric Gustaf Franc, the former Secretary of the Presidential Office, for a position of the Secretary of State. On the same day Pehr Olof von Asp replaced Franc at the Presidential Office. Both were men of extraordinary abilities, sincerely and utterly devoted to Gustav III who trusted them implicitly. However, it is puzzling that in the act of Franc's appointment it was not mentioned that he was appointed a Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. It was only mentioned there that, in the absence of the Director General of the Post Office, Franc would perform his duties with the possibility of getting formal nomination for that position in the future. As Ulric Gustaf Franc had right to participate and speak in the meetings of the Chancellor College, his rights were similar to the entitlements of the previous Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. The extraordinary position of Franc in the Gustav III's government was confirmed, however, by his salary (1,2 thousand *riksdalers* a year) that was much higher than salaries of other Secretaries of State (800 *riksdalers* a year). A few months later Gustav III ended the old conflict between the Foreign Office and the Presidential Office. On October 16, 1787 the king granted indefinite leave to the head of the Foreign Office, Fredenheim. During his absence the Secretary of the Presidential Office, Pehr Olof von Asp, was to supervise work of both offices. In this way, one of the closest Gustav III's collaborators took full control of the Stockholm court's foreign correspondence. Thus, in the critical period of 1787–1788, when Sweden started preparations for war with Russia, Ulric Gustaf Franc and Pehr Olof von Asp were the closest king's associates in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Their formal superior, Senator Johan Gabriel Oxenstierna, was deliberately

³⁹ See C.G. Schultz v. Ascheraden to Gustav III, Paris, May 8, 1788, RA, Gallica vol. 498; E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, May 15 (and the apostille to the message) and 18, 1788, *ibidem*, Gallica vol. 471.

dismissed from everything related to the foreign policy of the state. Those matters were not discussed at the meetings of the Senate, either. It clearly appeared in evidence of the Council of State. The minutes of its meetings were in fact short royal decisions presented to the members of that magistracy⁴⁰.

The Swedish public opinion was growingly dissatisfied with an explicit violation of the constitution of 1772, increasing government spending and the influence of the coteries of royal favourites that were opposing each other at court⁴¹. The growing criticism of the government and louder demands of the noble opposition that wanted the king to abide law and reduce court's spending prompted Gustav III to accelerate war preparations. In military operations he saw a chance to reduce a sizable public debt. The war was also to divert the public opinion's attention from growing domestic difficulties. Moreover, he hoped that a winning war against Sweden's eternal enemy would once again reunite the Swedish nobility around the king's throne. It would give him an opportunity to significantly increase his authority. Although Gustav III was preparing to the war with Russia, he kept a close watch on actions of the court of Copenhagen. In May 1787 he created the Consulate General in Christiania (Oslo). Its main task was to spy and maintain contacts with Norwegian malcontents. Gustav III knew that he would not conquer Norway as long as the Danish-Russian alliance lasted. Thus, he planned to weaken Russia by defeating it militarily. The war with Catherine II was also to remove once and for all a threat of the Russian intervention in the internal affairs of his country. The winning war with the St. Petersburg court was also to pave Gustav III's way to the future conflict with Denmark and annexation of Norway. The ruler of Sweden was aware that to realise his ambitious political plans and fight with Russia he had to find strong allies. Therefore, he warmly welcomed the outbreak of the Russo-Turkish war. He also made diplomatic efforts to assure financial and military support from potential

⁴⁰ See A. Forssell, *Histoire de l'administration des affaires étrangères 1721–1809*, in: *Histoire de l'administration des affaires étrangères de Suède*, Upsal 1940, pp. 312–313; N.F. Holm, *Franc Ulric Gustaf*, in: *Svenskt Biografiskt Lexikon* [further on: *SBL*], vol. XVI, Stockholm 1964–1966, p. 411; E. Naumann, *Asp Pehr Olof von*, in: *ibidem*, vol. II, Stockholm 1920, pp. 383–388; O. Jäger-skiöld, *Den svenska utrikespolitikens historia*, vol. II, part 2 (1721–1792), Stockholm 1957, p. 250.

⁴¹ In March 1787 the wife of the king's brother, Charles, Duke of Södermanland, noted in her diary that two parties were fighting for power and influences at the court of Stockholm: "l'un est celui des intrigants, qui veulent acquérir de la gloire, un nom, mais où il y a néanmoins des gens assez habiles (Toll, Munck, Oxenstierna); l'autre a aussi des gens assez habiles, mais c'est celui des gaspilleurs, qui sont des bons vivans et qui veulent s'enrichir et attraper l'argent de toutes manières, mais qui souvent les dépensent aussitôt. A la tête de ce parti est Armfelt; il a pour adjoints Schröderheim et Carlson. Armfelt aime à vivre grandement, à faire beaucoup de dépense; aussi tous ceux qui veulent avoir des charges, le payent sous main pour les obtenir. Mais comme il est prodigue... il dépense fort vite ce qu'il a reçu". As cited in E. Tegnér, *Gustaf Mauritz Armfelt. Studier ur Armfelts efterlemnade papper samt andra handskrifna och tryckta källor*, col. I (*Armfelt och Gustaf III*), Stockholm 1883, p. 176. See also C. T. Odhner, *op. cit.*, p. 521.

opponents of Catherine II. He was mostly disappointed with France. The court of Versailles was strongly opposed to the Swedish plan of defending the Ottoman Empire and advised Gustav III to maintain friendly relations with Russia. At first, Swedish efforts in Berlin and London did not bring better results, either. Only Turkey, hugely interested in the Swedish diversion in the North, promised to renew an old subsidy treaty with the court of Stockholm. In such a situation in late October 1787 Gustav III paid an unexpected visit to the court of Copenhagen. He wanted to be reassured that Denmark would remain neutral in case of the Swedish-Russian war. But it was impossible to achieve that goal. The Danish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Andreas Peter von Bernstorff, was willing to do whatever possible to improve relations with Sweden. Yet, he did not intend to violate Danish treaty obligations towards Russia. Thus, the Copenhagen talks failed to reach an agreement. Gustav III left empty-handed from Copenhagen but still planned to travel to Berlin. There was also the possibility of his departure to England. Ultimately, however, the king returned to Stockholm⁴².

The trip to Copenhagen proved to be productive, though. In the capital of Denmark Gustav III met with the English envoy, Sir Hugh Elliot. The king assured him that although he had been an ally of France for a long time, he had never been an enemy of England. He tried to convince his interlocutor of the necessity of the Swedish-English coalition against Russia. The meeting produced the desired result very soon. Since then Elliott had started to strongly support a concept of closer relations between London and Stockholm. However, the Danish journey of the ruler of Sweden alarmed the court of Versailles. It was a subject of much concern of the French *chargé d'affaires* at Stockholm as well. During the king's visit in Copenhagen Chevalier Jean de Gaussen wrote to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Armand Marc de Montmorin, that: "It is said aloud that an insatiable desire to play some role in the European policy makes more unpleasant everything to Gustav III that could encourage him to maintain an alliance with France, stay in good relations with his neighbours, fully dedicate himself to the improvement of his administration and deal with everything that could lead to true happiness and

⁴² See H.A. Barton, *Scandinavia in the Revolutionary Era 1760–1815*, Minneapolis 1986, pp. 154–155; A. Söderhjelm, *op. cit.*, p. 63; E. Lönnroth, *Gustavus III of Sweden: the Final Years. A Political Portrait*, in: idem, *Scandinavians. Selected Historical Essays*, Göteborg 1977, pp. 103–104; E. Tegnér, *op. cit.*, pp. 190–193; B. Hennings, *Gustav III. En biografi*, Stockholm 1957, p. 260. For more information on the reasons why Gustav III sought war with Russia see G. Rystand, *Varör krig? Nagot om bakgrund och 'orsaker' till Gustav III:s ryska krig*, in: *Gustav III:s ryska krig*, G. Artéus (ed.), Stockholm 1992, pp. 9–22; Z. Anusik, *Geneza i początki wojny szwedzko-rosyjskiej (kampania 1788 r.) w świetle korespondencji Gustawa III*, in: *Między Zachodem a Wschodem*, vol. II (*Studia ku czci profesora Jacka Staszewskiego*), J. Dumanowski, B. Dybaś, K. Mikulski, J. Poraziński, S. Roszak (eds), Toruń 2003, pp. 43–62.

a well-being of his subjects. However, this kind of quiet and calm life is too monotonous for the ruler and does not suit him at all. His numerous whims and fancies cannot be satisfied by sumptuous ceremonies, performances, celebrations and different pleasures. Gustav III wants to achieve fame and win renown at all costs. For this reason, he is looking around and searching for such a power that will notice its chance in caressing his drive to fame, active action and huge expenses". Finally, Gaussen openly stated that the King of Sweden was frantically looking for potential allies against Russia because it was the biggest obstacle to his political plans. The conversation between the Archbishop of Toulouse and the Swedish Ambassador to Paris, Eric Magnus Staël von Holstein, referred to the report mentioned above. On November 17, 1787 Loménie de Brienne asked the Swedish diplomat about the aim of Gustav III's trip to Copenhagen. He also asked him whether it was true that Gustav III intended to go from the capital of Denmark to Berlin. Staël knew nothing about it, but the archbishop did not believe him. A few days later the French Minister of Foreign Affairs had a similar conversation with the Swedish ambassador. It turned out that the cabinet of Versailles was well informed about the Stockholm court's actions. Montmorin said to Staël that the Russians suspected that Gustav III had travelled to Copenhagen to break the Danish-Russian alliance. The Swedish diplomacy tried to weaken the alliance between Copenhagen and St. Petersburg in the French environment as well. On December 28, 1787 Staël von Holstein wrote that, in accordance with the king's order, he talked to the Danish envoy to the court of Versailles, Otto von Blome. They were talking about an alliance between Denmark and Russia. According to Staël, the Danish diplomat spoke to him frankly and openly. Both, he and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bernstorff, seemed to see great benefits for their country from the closer union with Sweden. Yet, the improvement of relations with the court of Stockholm could not be achieved at the expense of a deterioration of relations with Russia. Blome said that Denmark had great obligations to the empress in connection with Holstein and thus intended to fulfil all treaty obligations to the St. Petersburg court. Staël tried to convince Blome that an alliance with England would be more profitable for Denmark than the one with Russia. The Dane replied that the English were friends only in need. The meeting gave no results. However, Staël came to the conclusion that Denmark allied with Russia only because it feared Prussia and distrusted other powers. He also assured Gustav III that with the help of England it would be possible to break the Danish-Russian alliance and make the court of Copenhagen remain neutral in case of war with Russia⁴³.

⁴³ See E. Lönnroth, *op. cit.*, p. 104; A. Söderhjelm, *op. cit.*, pp. 63–64; E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, November 18, 29 and December 28, 1787, RA, Gallica vol. 470.

Although his visit to Copenhagen did not bring about any concrete results, Gustav III was not worried about the security of the borders with Denmark and Norway. He believed that the British intervention would easily prevent the Danish hostility towards Sweden. Thus, the ruler of Sweden decided to calmly and consequently continue his preparations for war with Russia. At the end of 1787 he sent Johan Albert Ehrenström for a trip to Livonia and Estonia. He had to judge sentiments of local people and start the anti-Russian revolt. Lars von Engeström was sent with a similar mission to Warsaw. Gustav III's sister, Princess Sophia Albertina, left to Quedlinburg to gain the favour of the court of Berlin. She was to act as a mediator in negotiations on the Prussian-Swedish subsidy treaty. The situation in the capital of Prussia seemed to favour Gustav III's plans. Part of the public opinion opted for an alliance with England, Sweden and the Republic of Poland and urged Frederick William II's government to support Turkey and defeat Austria. Unfortunately for Sweden, at the turn of 1787 and 1788 the Prussian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ewald Friedrich von Hertzberg, revealed to European courts his old plan (from 1778) which was intended to lead to the pacification of the East. The plan assumed the Turkish defeat. Prussia, as a mediator in future peace negotiations, was to persuade Turkey to give Moldavia and Wallachia to Austria. Austria was to give Galicia to Poland instead, which in turn was to give Gdańsk, Toruń and part of the Greater Poland to Prussia. Hertzberg hoped that his plan would be accepted both, in Vienna and St. Petersburg where he also presented a proposal to extend the old Prussian-Russian alliance. Thus, he was reluctant to accept Gustav III's ideas and rejected the project of the Prussian-Swedish cooperation against Catherine II. In such a situation, the court of St. James was the Stockholm court's last hope. Hugh Elliot was one of the most ardent supporters of Sweden in London. In January 1788 he prepared a draft of a treaty of alliance between Holland, England, Prussia, Denmark and Sweden that were to ally against Russia. Gustaf Adam von Nolcken, Gustav III's representative in the British capital, was negotiating the Swedish-English agreement as well. However, his talks with William Pitt and Francis Godolphin Osborne, Marquis of Carmarthen did not bring the desired results. The British feared that a formal arrangement with Gustav III would push France into Russia's arms and thus strengthen Catherine II's position in the East. In the first months of 1788 the ruler of Sweden remained isolated in the international arena and could not count on any support for his aggressive plans against Russia⁴⁴.

⁴⁴ See H.A. Barton, *Scandinavia...*, pp. 155–156; W. Konopczyński, *Lars von Engeströms mission i Polen 1787–1791. Ett bidrag till historien om Gustav III:s polska politik*, "Historisk Tidskrift", vol. XLIV, Stockholm 1924, p. 1 and fol.; Z. Anusik, *Wznowienie stosunków dyplomatycznych polsko-szwedzkich u progu obrad Sejmu Czteroletniego*, "Acta Universitatis Lodzensis", Folia historica 49, 1993, pp. 69–70 and fol.; E. Tégner, *op. cit.*, pp. 200–201; R.H. Lord, *Drugi*

Gustav III had not become discouraged and continued his preparations for war. He held conferences with a group of his closest collaborators: Johan Christopher Toll, Eric Ruuth, Olof Wallquist, Carl Gustaf Nordin and Ulric Gustaf Franc. In January 1788 the king had a ground plan of an attack on Russia which was to be further elaborated by Toll. Insufficient financial resources for future campaign were the biggest obstacle to the implementation of Gustav III's plan. Toll and Ruuth advised him not to start a war without adequate funds. However, the king convinced his advisers that he would obtain foreign subsidies until the military operations begun. Those were empty promises, as diplomatic talks in Paris, London and Berlin failed to bring any concrete results. Yet, in March 1788 Gustav III had already taken an irrevocable decision to start military operations. On April 13 he presented at the meeting of the Military Council held in Haga Palace near Stockholm Toll's plan of an attack on Russia. It provided that army corps of ground forces of 20 thousand soldiers would land in Oranienbaum and take control of St. Petersburg. The second army corps was to land in the vicinity of Kronstadt and destroy both, its fortifications and the Russian fleet that stationed there. The third army corps was to break resistance of the weak Russian forces on the border with Finland. Then, it was to march straight on the capital of Russia where it should join the troops from Oranienbaum. Toll considered his plan to be implementable provided that Denmark would be neutralised and the Swedish fleet would control the Baltic Sea. During the conference Gustav III assured his advisers of the British support. When Gustaf Adam von Nolcken sent his report from London and informed the king that his talks with Pitt were a failure, Gustav III did not notify about it neither Toll nor anyone else responsible for war preparations. In the spring of 1788 those preparations were at full speed. The king did not listen to the opinions of senior commanders about the poor condition of the army and the fleet. For example, the Swedish fleet's commander, Admiral Carl August Ehrensward, demanded six more years to reinforce the fleet. He claimed that if somebody used the fleet before that time, he would have to be either a fool or a traitor⁴⁵. Gustav III, however, consistently sought the war and used the anti-Russian sentiment of the part of the Swedish public opinion that was additionally

rozbiór Polski, Warszawa 1973, pp. 52–54; *Historia dyplomacji*, vol. I (do 1871 r.), W.M. Chwo-stow et al. (ed.), Warszawa 1973, pp. 428–429; O. Jägerskiöld, *op. cit.*, p. 310; E. Lönnroth, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

⁴⁵ See E. Birck, *General Tolls krigsplan år 1788. Dess utförande och sammanbrott*, Helsingfors 1944, pp. 3–89; idem, *Angående Tolls krigsplan 1788. Ett bemötande*, Helsingfors 1945; A. Brückner, *Russland und Schweden 1788*, "Historische Zeitschrift", vol. XXII, 1869, pp. 312–402; H.A. Barton, *Scandinavia...*, p. 156; idem, *Gustav III and the East Baltic 1771–1792*, "Journal of Baltic Studies", vol. VII, 1976, pp. 16, 24–25; O. Jägerskiöld, *op. cit.*, p. 312; E. Lönnroth, *op. cit.*, pp. 105–106; R.N. Bain, *Gustavus III and his Contemporaries 1746–1792. An Overlooked Chapter of Eighteenth Century History*, vol. II, London 1894, pp. 13–14.

provoked by actions of Andrey K. Razumovsky, Catherine II's envoy to Stockholm. During the *Riksdag* of 1786 the house of the Russian envoy was a meeting place of the opposition against Gustav III. Over the next several months relations of the Russian diplomat with opponents of Gustav III further tightened. On January 4, 1788 Chevalier Jean de Gaussen wrote to Montmorin: "Razumovsky is working from dawn till dusk. His house is a meeting place of all well known enemies of the King of Sweden. From here they intend to go around the province and spread the fire of disorder and rebellion"⁴⁶. Certainly, the conduct of the Russian envoy was favourable to Gustav III's plans.

The court of St. Petersburg was seriously alarmed by Sweden's preparations to war. Catherine was aware that the capital would be in danger in case of a surprise attack from the Finnish border. The empress learnt about Swedish armaments at the beginning of April 1788 and since then she had taken steps to appease the nascent conflict. She courteously and peaceably replied to the Gustav III's note in which he asked about the aim of Russian marine armaments. At the same time, she suggested that they were directed against him. However, just in case, the empress stopped the Mediterranean operations of her Baltic fleet that were planned for 1788. She also instructed Razumovsky to cooperate with the anti-royal opposition and paralyse Gustav III's hostile actions⁴⁷. On May 23, 1788 Gaussen wrote about the Russian envoy to the French Minister of Foreign Affairs: "It seems that he received new orders to bother the King of Sweden. Not only through his very close relations with the opposition, but also by his behaviour towards that ruler"⁴⁸. The French *chargé d'affaires* at Stockholm also noticed Swedish armaments. In April 1788 he wrote to Paris about strenuous efforts of Gustav III's diplomats in England, Turkey and Holland. According to Gaussen, the main purpose of those actions was to obtain funds for a war with Russia. The cabinet of Versailles, in turn, was seriously alarmed by news from Stockholm. On May 18, 1788 Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein informed Gustav III that Montmorin feared the news about Swedish armaments in Karlskrona. Denmark officially asked France whether it urged Gustav III to start naval armaments. The French assured the court of Copenhagen that Swedish armaments were purely defensive and they did not have anything to do with them. Staël tried to justify actions of his court and informed the Minister of Foreign Affairs about Razumovsky's intrigues against the king. However, Montmorin did not accept those explanations. He answered that although

⁴⁶ See J. de Gaussen to A.M. de Montmorin, Stockholm, January 4, 1788 as cited in A. Söderhjelm, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

⁴⁷ See I. de Madariaga, *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great*, New Haven–London 1981, p. 401; R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

⁴⁸ See J. de Gaussen to A.M. de Montmorin, Stockholm, May 23, 1788 as cited in A. Söderhjelm, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

Catherine was far from attacking Sweden, it could not be predicted how she would react to Swedish armaments. The minister also warned his interlocutor that war preparations of the Stockholm court could provoke a general war. It would certainly bring trouble to Sweden and France did not want to share it. When Staël von Holstein mentioned once again the possibility of the Franco-Russian alliance, Montmorin assured him that if such an alliance was to be made, Sweden would certainly have its rightful place in it. A few days later, the ambassador reported from Paris that Swedish armaments had sensationalised both, diplomats and the French court. When Staël was asked about the purpose of those armaments, he assured his interlocutors about their defensive nature. He also said that Sweden feared the great Russian fleet's manoeuvres near Swedish ports. Despite those explanations everybody was convinced that Gustav III intended to oppose the transit of the Russian fleet from the Baltic Sea to the Mediterranean Sea. Fearing the worst, on May 22, 1788 Armand Marc de Montmorin ordered the French *chargé d'affaires* at Stockholm to persuade Gustav III to change his plans and to do everything to prevent the outbreak of the war in the North which in current circumstances would be extremely inconvenient for France⁴⁹.

At the end of May 1788 Gustav III's war preparations against Russia were very advanced. The Swedish fleet was to be in combat readiness soon. The court of Stockholm still did not know, however, how France would behave when the Swedish army began its military offensive. Despite Staël's warnings, Gustav III still hoped that France would meet its obligations as an ally. During his conversation with Gaussen the king turned to the French diplomat with those words: "if I am forced [to go to war – author's note], I expect that my friends will not leave me". The Swedish ruler was quickly disenchanted. The court of Versailles did not intend to support military operations of its ally. On June 6, 1788 Montmorin wrote to Gaussen: "If you notice that this ruler is still determined to compromise himself, show our decisiveness and inform him of the dissatisfaction with which the king accepts such a bizarre and unwise decision". Two days later, on June 8, 1788 the Chevalier de Gaussen turned to the King of Sweden with an official verbal note. During his conversation with Gustav III the French diplomat said that the King of France was alarmed by huge armaments of Sweden in Karlskrona. According to the French ministry, Gustav III had inalienable right to be militarily prepared in case of an imminent attack. However, Gaussen told him that in his court's opinion it seemed impossible that the Russian court, occupied with another war, would attempt an attack on Sweden. Thus, on behalf of Louis XVI, he called the ruler of Sweden to come to his senses and

⁴⁹ See A. Söderhjelm, *op. cit.*, pp. 79–80; E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, May 18 and 22, 1788, RA, Gallica vol. 471; A.M. de Montmorin to J. de Gaussen, Paris, May 22, 1788 as cited in A. Söderhjelm, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

maintain peace. He also warned the king that Swedish armaments could lead to the outbreak of war at any moment, the war that according to France Catherine did not want. Louis XVI warned his ally that if it started a war on its own, the court of Versailles will not be able to give him any help. He also warned him that Denmark could attack him, if he decided to strike on Russia. At the end of the conversation Gaussen reminded Gustav III that the peace treaty of 1784 obliged both parties to an earlier disclosure of their intentions. He also stated that for a long time Sweden and France had more in common than just treaty obligations. For that reason, he openly confessed that France did not intend to be part of any new political systems invented by Gustav III. Thus, on behalf of Louis XVI, he urged the king once again to come to his senses and maintain peace with Catherine II. Gustav III responded to Gaussen that Russia was first to start armaments. There were only 12 ships of the line and five Swedish frigates in Karlskrona. Russia had at its disposal a much larger fleet. France knew what Gustav III had to suffer from Russia for years. The king had enough of Catherine II's arrogance and wanted to fight for his independence. Sweden was deeply interested in the eastern war. France should be interested in it too, if it cared for the fate of Turkey. Gustav III had signed the treaty with Turkey and France had had its share in it too. The king also reminded to Gaussen that in October 1787 Staël von Holstein had asked the court of Versailles what attitude both allied courts should take towards the Russo-Turkish war. After two months he received a vague answer. As for Russia, Gustav III preferred to perceive it as an open enemy rather than a false friend. He also accused the St. Petersburg court of deliberately creating internal difficulties in his country. He said to the French *chargé d'affaires* that in the event of war he would ask France for help. Finally, he stated that the court of Versailles should not worry in advance about his intentions. He wanted peace which he was able to maintain during 17 years of his reign. Yet, he preferred an open war to the illusory peace. If he was forced to fight, he would ask his old ally for help. And he could not be made by that ally to keep peace against his honour and at the cost of unacceptable proposals⁵⁰.

⁵⁰ On May 22, 1788 Gustav III wrote to Armfeldt: "Je passé le Rubicon aujourd'hui, et pour parler littérément vrai, le senat me l'a fait passer. Jamais je n'aurais cru que des vieillards fussent si animés et si courageux. L'unanimité la plus parfaite a régné dans cette délibération. Enfin l'ordre est donné d'armer tous les galères, de mettre toutes les forces de la Suède en mouvement". See Gustav III to G.M. Armfeldt, Stockholm, May 22, 1788, *Konung Gustaf III:s bref till friherre G.M. Armfeldt* [further on: *Bref till Armfeldt*], E. Tegnér (ed.), in: *Historiska Handlingar*, vol. XII, Stockholm 1883, p. 10. See also J. de Gaussen to A.M. de Montmorin, Stockholm, May 30, 1788 as cited in A. Söderhjelm, *op. cit.*, p. 84; A.M. de Montmorin to J. de Gaussen, Paris, June 6, 1788 as cited in *ibidem*, p. 86; *Precis de l'entretien du Chevalier Gaussen* ce 8 Juin 1788, an enclosure to the message of Gustav III to E.M. Staël v. Holstein, Haga Palace, June 13, 1788, RA, Huvudarkivet, Kabinettet/UD, B1B, vol. 121; Répons à l'entretien du Chevalier Gaussen du 8 Juin

During their meeting Gustav III and the Chevalier de Gausсен definitively determined the position of both allied courts. The French *chargé d'affaires* warned the ruler of Sweden that if he started a war without the court of Versailles' consent, he should not expect any help from it. Nevertheless, Gustav III still hoped that he would receive some support. On June 13, 1788 Jean de Gausсен informed Montmorin that after his talks with Johan Gabriel Oxenstierna he came to the conclusion that in the near future Gustav III would turn to France for support in a war with Russia. The French diplomat also wrote about an optimism of the court of Stockholm which believed that Louis XVI would fulfil his treaty obligations and would not refuse to help his old ally. The optimism of the cabinet of Stockholm was completely unjustified. At the same time Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein wrote from Paris about his last meeting with the French Minister of Foreign Affairs. Montmorin anxiously told him about a large amount of Swedish armed galleys and a concentration of troops in Finland. The minister was convinced that Gustav III was closely operating with England and Prussia and that those two countries urged him to take such steps. He warned his interlocutor that one day Russia would want to take revenge for all troubles caused by Gustav III. On June 19, 1788 the Swedish ambassador wrote that a possible outbreak of war between Sweden and Russia deeply interested the French public opinion. People were talking in Paris about secret treaties and action plans agreed between Sweden, Turkey, Spain, England and Prussia. Yet, some supposed that Sweden would be attacked by Russia, not otherwise. Other observers of the events occurring in the North believed, however, that it was impossible that Catherine II, embroiled in a war with Turkey, would provoke new enemies⁵¹.

For the court of Stockholm the most important issue was an official position of the cabinet of Versailles. It did not change at all, though. On June 22, 1788 Armand Marc de Montmorin wrote to Gausсен that if Gustav III started a war and violated his obligations to the court of Versailles, France would be forced to refuse him support provided under the treaty of 1784. On the same day, the Minister of Foreign Affairs gave new instructions to Louis Marc, Marquis of Pons who was about to return from Versailles to Stockholm. Montmorin wrote in them about great armaments started by Gustav III.

1788, an enclosure to the message of Gustav III to E.M. Staël v. Holstein, Haga Palace, June 13, 1788, *ibidem*. It is worth noting that Gustav III told his Ambassador to Paris to use the same arguments. On May 16, 1788 he ordered him to tell Montmorin that reinforcements in Karlskrona were taken after March 1788 when increased movements of the Russian troops in Finland had been noticed. See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, June 5, 1788, *ibidem*, Gallica vol. 471.

⁵¹ See J. de Gausсен to A.M. de Montmorin, Stockholm, June 13, 1788 as cited in A. Söderhjelm, *op. cit.*, p. 89; E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, June 15 and 19, 1788, RA, Gallica vol. 471.

According to the French minister, the Swedish king was expanding his fleet and intended to send a large army to Finland. He also wanted to participate in all major European events. Montmorin predicted, however, that it would reveal all weaknesses of his resources. Although Gustav III was talking about defensive steps, his real purpose was completely different. Thus, the Marquis of Pons received an order to find out what were the true intentions of the Swedish king. He was also to discourage him from war with Russia and make him aware of what a threat all tsarina's forces might pose to him. According to Montmorin, Gustav III would gain nothing in that war but the vain glory. His inopportune actions could only complicate a political situation in Europe and the policy of the court of Versailles. Thus, Pons had to investigate whether Gustav III acted in agreement with Berlin and London. He had also to convince Gustav III of the risk of the cooperation with countries that were sure to sacrifice Sweden for their own interests and would not defend it against Russia. The minister explained to the ambassador that the planned Franco-Russian treaty would be a sufficient guarantee of Sweden's peace. The Turks were aggressors, therefore, they were not entitled to refer to conditions of the treaty of 1741 with Sweden where a mutual assistance in the event of an attack from Russia was guaranteed. France was attentively observing Turkey and despite huge troubles caused by it, the court of Versailles would do everything to restore peace between the sultan, Austria and Russia. Pons also received an order to convince Gustav III that some of his assumptions were false. It was not true that he had to start war with Russia because Catherine II was interfering in the internal affairs of his country. Sweden had never been safer from Russia. The empress had to keep all forces on the other side of her country and thus had no reason to fight with the Swedes. Finally, Montmorin stated that if war had broken out before the arrival of the Ambassador to Stockholm, his role would become more difficult. He would be forced to express the king's disapproval of actions that certainly had been inspired by the English and facilitated through English subsidies. In that case, Pons had to insist on Gustav III to re-establish peace with Russia as soon as possible. If he refused to do so, Louis XVI would not consider the King of Sweden his friend. He betrayed Louis XVI's trust by his behaviour. He made a big mistake that would lead Sweden to ruin that France would not be able to prevent⁵².

⁵² See A.M. de Montmorin to J. de Gaussen, Paris, June 22, 1788 as cited in A. Söderhjelm, *op. cit.*, pp. 90–91; *Mémoire pour servir de supplément aux instructions du marquis de Pons, ambassadeur du roi en Suède, retournant à Stockholm, 20 Juin 1788*, in: *Recueil des instructions données aux ambassadeurs et ministres de France depuis les traités de Westphalie jusqu'à la révolution française*, vol. II (*Suède*), A. Geffroy (ed.), Paris 1885, pp. 471–476. See also A. Söderhjelm, *op. cit.*, pp. 94–95.

On the same day when Montmorin was preparing new instructions for the Marquis of Pons, Staël informed Gustav III that the French court had sent a special courier to St. Petersburg to dissuade Russia from attacking Sweden. The ambassador also wrote that the French seemed to be offended because Gustav III had not informed them of his intentions. The ministry was surprised that the King of Sweden had not taken any steps to renew two treaties with the court of Versailles the validity of which was to expire soon. On June 26, 1788 Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein submitted to the Minister of Foreign Affairs an official note and demanded of France that it should fulfil provisions of the treaty of 1784. The court of Stockholm demanded additional subsidies and a cash equivalent in lieu of military support. It did not want any help from the French squadron at that moment. It planned to use it only if its help was to be absolutely necessary to support the Swedish fleet's activities. The ambassador, according to the orders he had received, had to discuss all technical details of that operation with ministers of Louis XVI. Three days later Staël wrote about his meetings with Montmorin and the Archbishop of Sens. The minister once again mentioned the alleged relations between Sweden and England. He seemed to be convinced that the court of London urged Gustav III to break off with Russia. He also talked a lot about the situation in the North and possible consequences of disrupting the existing balance of power in the region. He complained that he had learnt about Swedish armaments at the same time as the French public opinion. Yet, he tried to convince the Swedish diplomat that an alliance with such a valuable ally as Gustav III was much needed. At the end of the conversation Montmorin said that France was ready to do everything to maintain peace between Sweden and Russia. Staël heard the same arguments from the archbishop. Loménie de Brienne only added that France would immediately come to an understanding with Sweden, if it decided to sign a formal alliance with Russia. Thus, Staël von Holstein concluded that the court of Versailles was willing to maintain its alliance with Sweden. However, it did not mean that France wanted to support aggressive intentions of Gustav III. The very next day, on June 30, 1788, Montmorin replied to the note of the Swedish ambassador. The French Minister of Foreign Affairs gave a negative answer. Although he complimented Gustav III, he also emphasised the fact that his armaments, that had astonished the whole Europe, could have prompted Russia to start war preparations. Montmorin stated that the court of Versailles did not know anything about hostile intentions of Russia. Yet, Louis XVI instructed his minister in St. Petersburg to get reassurance from the empress that she had no hostile intentions towards Sweden. If, contrary to all predictions, Gustav III was attacked, France would not hesitate to fulfil its treaty obligations. Even then, though, the court of Versailles would

try to stop war and restore peace as soon as possible. Such a reply clearly showed that France could propose to its ally only *bona officia* at the court of St. Petersburg⁵³.

Meanwhile, the Swedish-Russian relations further worsened. On June 13, 1788 Andrey Razumovsky handed Gustav III the note of his court which awkwardly mentioned a conflict of interest between the Swedish king and his subjects. Thus, on June 23 the Swedish court issued an ultimatum and demanded to dismiss the Russian envoy to Stockholm. At that time, Gustav III was looking for any pretext to start his military operations. On June 24 he left Stockholm and went to his troops in Finland. On July 2, 1788 the king arrived to Helsinki. Before he docked at the port, the Swedish-Russian relations had escalated once more. On June 28, 1788 a group of Swedish soldiers dressed in Russian uniforms (malicious claimed that they were borrowed from the Stockholm opera) attacked their own guards in and around the Finnish town of Puumala. In response, on July 3, the Swedish artillery bombarded the Russian fortress Nyslott. The king publicised both border incidents and justified himself for having started an offensive war without the consent of the *Riksdag*, as obliged under the constitution of 1772. He shifted the responsibility for an armed conflict onto St. Petersburg. Catherine II facilitated it to him. In her manifesto of June 30/July 11, 1788 she tactlessly reminded Gustav III that he owed his crown to Russia that had insisted on enthroning his father. Yet, an insulting tone of that manifesto had no major impact on further Gustav III's decisions. The King of Sweden received the manifesto of Catherine II on July 12, 1788. Before that date he had made an ultimatum to the court of St. Petersburg. He demanded to punish Razumovsky, cede the Russian part of Finland with Priozersk, return Livonia, Estonia and Karelia and accept the Swedish mediation in the Russo-Turkish conflict. As a future mediator he demanded to return Crimea to the Turks, return to the Russian borders of 1774 or even 1768, if the Porte wished it, and demolish all Russian frontier fortresses. Catherine had no choice but to decisively reject those exorbitant and incredibly brazen demands. Her Swedish cousin desired nothing else. Gustav III had started the war before the court of St. Petersburg took any decision on the submitted document⁵⁴.

⁵³ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, June 22 and 29, 1788, RA, Gallica vol. 471; Note remise à Mr le Comte de Montmorin le 26 Juin 1788, E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, July 1, 1788, apostille No. 2, *ibidem*; Copie de la réponse de Mr de Montmorin de Versailles le 30 Juin, E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, July 1, 1788, apostille No. 1, *ibidem*; O. Jägerskiöld, *op. cit.*, p. 315.

⁵⁴ Before his departure from Stockholm, Gustav III had appointed the senator, Count Carl Wilhelm Düben, to a post of the Interim Minister of Foreign Affairs in place of the absent Johan Gabriel Oxenstierna. He gave him appropriate instructions and ordered to work closely with U.G. Franc. The latter was formally subordinated to the senator. See Gustav III to G.M. Armfelt, Fjöderholmarne, June 24, 1788, *Bref till Armfelt*, p. 23. For more information on border

BEGINNINGS OF THE SWEDISH-RUSSIAN WAR: THE FAILURE OF GUSTAV III

The success of the Swedish war plan largely depended on the success of the Swedish fleet of lines that was commanded by the king's brother, Charles, Duke of Södermanland. On July 17, 1788 the Swedish fleet, consisting of 15 ships of the line and seven frigates, fought near the island of Hogland with 17 ships of the line and seven frigates from the Russian squadron of admiral Samuel Griegh. The Russian fleet had 250 cannons more than the Swedish one but was unable to take advantage of it and was forced to retreat. The losses of the Russians were greater than the losses of the Swedes. Yet, the battle of Hogland had not brought results expected by Gustav III. The Russian fleet still had its full fighting capacity. Thus, plans to embark Swedish troops near St. Petersburg had to be abandoned. It would be possible to take control of the Russian capital only after the successful campaign on land. The prospects for such a victory looked less than promising. After his arrival to Helsinki Johan Christopher Toll noticed first signs of discontent in Finnish units. He immediately informed the king about it. Yet, the latter ignored the warning and ordered Finnish regiments to march towards the Russian border. As a result of that order, more than 50 officers resigned and refused to participate in the war that had been launched without the *Riksdag's* approval. Unfortunately, it also turned out that Toll had not properly prepared rear units. Logistics was completely disorganised. Soldiers lacked food, uniforms, weapons and ammunition. Johan Christopher Toll was blamed for a poor preparation of the campaign. He fell out of favour and was dismissed. Gustav III still had in Finland 25 thousand soldiers against 15 thousand Russians, though. He decided to implement much modified Toll's plan of action. On July 19, 1788 the Swedes attacked Nyslott. Four days later the Swedish army, commanded by the king himself, started a siege of the fortress Fredrikshamn. On the same day, July 23, the Swedish envoy to St. Petersburg, Johan Fredrik von Nolcken, submitted to Catherine II an official declaration of war⁵⁵.

incidents and an escalation of the Swedish-Russian conflict see I. de Madariaga, *op. cit.*, p. 401; A. Brückner, *op. cit.*, pp. 365, 393; H.A. Barton, *Scandinavia...*, p. 156; R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, pp. 15–16; O. Jägerskiöld, *op. cit.*, p. 316; A. Söderhjelm, *op. cit.*, p. 95; L. Stavenow, *Den gustavianska tiden 1772–1809, Sveriges historia till våra dagar*, E. Hildebrand, L. Stavenow (eds), vol. X, Stockholm 1925, pp. 154–155; Z. Anusik, *Geneza...*, pp. 53–56. See also notes handed in Stockholm by A. Razumovsky, RA, *Muscovitica* vol. 629.

⁵⁵ See C.T. Odhner, *op. cit.*, vol. III (1787–1788), Stockholm 1905, pp. 62–65, 76–80, 93–95 and fol.; B. Hennings, *op. cit.*, pp. 264–265; A. Geffroy, *op. cit.*, vol. II, Paris 1867, pp. 68–69; A. Söderhjelm, *op. cit.*, p. 95; O. Jägerskiöld, *Karl XIII*, in: *SBL*, vol. XX, Stockholm 1973–1975, pp. 675–683. It is worth mentioning that Gustav III's brother commanded the Swedish fleet at the battle of Hogland only nominally. The real commander in that battle was Henrik Otto

The war with Russia started to go wrong for Gustav III very soon. On July 31, 1788 a group of senior officers of the Finnish army, colonels R. Montgomery and Johan Henrik Hästesko among them, renounced allegiance to the king. Thus, the siege of Fredrikshamn was ceased and Swedish troops were withdrawn. Finnish troops were ordered to go to a camp near Liikala. The skerries fleet together with Swedish regiments sailed to Sveaborg. The king himself, who in fact lost control over the course of events, moved his headquarters to Kymmenegård. Meanwhile, the rebellion in the Finnish army was spreading. On August 9, 1788 a group of Finnish officers wrote in Liikala a letter to Catherine II in which they informed her of their friendly intentions and a desire to restore peace with Russia. General Carl Gustaf Armfelt, the commander of Finnish troops, was among the signatories of that letter. The messenger of conspirators, Major Johan Anders Jägerhorn, delivered the letter to St. Petersburg. Gustav III, warned about the intentions of the rebels, demanded that all Finnish officers who were present in the camp of Kymmenegård took the oath of allegiance. In response, on the night of August 12, 1788 they signed in Anjala a declaration and protested against war that had been started without the *Riksdag's* consent and pointed out bad preparation of the campaign. At the same time, confederate officers (the declaration was signed by 113 people) offered their mediation during peace talks with Catherine II. It was obvious that Gustav III could count on their obedience and participation in the fight only if the empress rejected a peace proposal. In the meantime, during her meeting with Jägerhorn, Catherine suggested to convene the Finnish *Riksdag* which was to make an official request for her help. In a written response to the letter from Liikala, which the empress issued to Jägerhorn, she encouraged Finnish separatists and promised them to support the building of an autonomous state under the tutelage of Russia. However, the prospect of a complete separation of Finland and Sweden frightened most conspirators. Thus, an agreement between them and the Russian court was not made. Gustav III, terrified by an unforeseen course of events, abandoned his headquarters in panic. He thought about escaping from Finland and starting peace negotiations. On August 27, 1788 the king's brother, Charles, Duke of Södermanland, arrived to Anjala and took command of the rebellious army. He led to a temporary agreement with confederate officers and restored order in the army. On September 27 the Swedish army, demoralised and unable to make any offensive

Nordenskjöld. See also I. de Madariaga, *op. cit.*, p. 401; R.C. Anderson, *Naval Wars in the Baltic during the Sailing Ship Epoch 1522–1850*, London 1910, p. 243 and fol.; R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, pp. 18–21; H.A. Barton, *Scandinavia...*, pp. 156–157; E. Lönnroth, *op. cit.*, p. 106; E. Tegnér, *op. cit.*, pp. 204–228, 233–235. For more information on the situation in the Swedish army see N.G. Nilsson, *Den gustavianska armén*, in: *Gustav III:s ryska...*, pp. 42–59.

operations, left the Russian part of Finland and took a position on the border river Kymmene⁵⁶.

In late August 1788 Gustav III's situation was tragic. The rebellious army was negotiating with the tsarina and demanded to convene the *Riksdag* immediately. The fleet was blocked in Sveaborg by the Russian squadron. Both, in Finland and Sweden the noble opposition became active whose representatives demanded to restore peace with Russia and meet the provisions of the constitution of 1772. Gustav III, mentally and morally broken down, was even thinking about the abdication and wanted to settle in France. Yet, he was sending desperate appeals for help to foreign courts. He turned to the court of Versailles first. He informed about his critical position England, Prussia and Denmark from which he demanded a mediation in peace talks with Russia. Initially, the king believed most in the courts of London and Berlin. On June 13, 1788 a temporary English-Prussian treaty was signed in Loo. On August 13, in Berlin, the treaty of Loo was turned into a formal defensive alliance. Because both, Prussia and England had previously signed treaties with Holland, in mid-August 1788 the famous Triple Alliance appeared on the European political scene. It was to be a counterweight to the imperial courts that were fighting with Turkey. Gustav III's hopes on receiving help from the allies from Loo and Berlin were, therefore, justified. On the other hand, the king's efforts to come to an agreement with the court of Copenhagen were futile. From the beginning of the war Catherine II had been insisting on Denmark's fulfilling its treaty obligations and attack Sweden. The court of Copenhagen did not want to do it. However, it was encouraged by the rebellion in the Swedish army and thus decided to fulfil its obligations as an Russia's ally. On August 19, 1788 the war against the court of Stockholm was

⁵⁶ For the course of hostilities in the campaign of 1788 see L. Ericson, *Kriget till lands 1788–1790*, in: *Gustav III:s ryska...*, pp. 80–83; J. Glete, *Kriget till sjöss 1788–1790*, in: *ibidem*, pp. 141–148. See also L. Stavenow, *op. cit.*, pp. 157–166; S. Carlsson, J. Rosén, *Svensk historia*, vol. II (*Tiden efter 1718*), Stockholm 1964, pp. 232–237; C.T. Odhner, *op. cit.*, vol. III, pp. 134 and fol., 139 and fol., 147 and fol., 157 and fol., 160 and fol., 236, 240–241; R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, pp. 22–29; A. Söderhjelm, *op. cit.*, p. 99; E. Birck, *Gustaf Mauritz Armfelts ryska negociationen under Anjalatiden*, Stockholm 1947; H.A. Barton, *Russia and the Problem of Sweden-Finland 1721–1809*, "East European Quarterly", vol. V, No. 4, January 1972, pp. 448–449; A. Brückner, *Der Anjalabund in Finland 1788*, "Baltische Monatsschrift", vol. XIX, 1879, pp. 309–354; I. de Madariaga, *op. cit.*, p. 402; H.A. Barton, *Scandinavia...*, pp. 157–158; E. Tégner, *op. cit.*, pp. 232–233, 237–247; Z. Anusik, *Geneza...*, pp. 58–61; idem, *Przykład szwedzki – konfederacja z Anjala*, in: *Król a prawo stanów do oporu*, M. Markiewicz, E. Opaliński, R. Skowron (eds), Kraków 2010, pp. 163–180. For the course of events described by one of the main initiators of the rebellion in the Finnish army see *Öfverste R. Montgomery's berättelse. Relation om hvad mig veterlingen händt under 1788 års campagne*, in: *Historiska Handlingar*, vol. I, Stockholm 1861, pp. 323–381. See also E. Birck, *Hastfer Berndt Johan*, in: *SBL*, vol. XVIII, Stockholm 1969–1971, pp. 346–349; idem, *Hästesko Johan Henrik (Jean Henric)*, in: *ibidem*, vol. XIX, Stockholm 1971–1973, pp. 654–656; idem, *Jägerhorn Johan (Jan) Anders*, in: *ibidem*, vol. XX, pp. 506–510.

proclaimed in Copenhagen. After that date slow preparations for the invasion of Sweden began. Gustav III was to exclaim: "I am saved!" after having heard news about the Danish declaration of war. He immediately decided to leave Finland as well. On September 1, 1788 the king was back in Stockholm. His situation did not seem to have changed. Some of his opponents were still demanding peace and convening the *Riksdag*. The king's abdication in the face of the noble opposition was soon expected. Even his closest friends, Gustaf Mauritz Armfelt and Evert Vilhelm Taube, thought that the convening of the *Riksdag* was the only possible solution to that situation. Gustav III did not hurry, however, with the decision on that case. He had noticed in Finland that local townspeople, clergymen and peasants disapproved of noble officers' betrayal. The officers, who had resigned and returned to Sweden before the rebellion in the Finnish army, were coldly welcomed in Stockholm as well. Thus, the king hoped that the Danish invasion would arouse patriotic feelings in people and would reunite around the throne the vast majority of the Swedish society. On September 11, 1788 Gustav III embarked on his famous journey to Dalarna. Three days later he gave a rousing speech to the inhabitants of Mora playing in front of them a scene from the opera written by himself that was entitled "Gustav Vasa". He made similar speeches in other cities, including the provincial capital, Falun. Everywhere he awakened anti-noble, patriotic and royalist sentiments. The success of the royal trip exceeded all expectations. About 20 thousand people volunteered to the army. The most valuable of them formed the volunteer corps of six thousand soldiers that was commanded by Gustaf Mauritz Armfelt. Gustav III had high hopes of those units. Peasants from Dalarna were not only to stop the expected attack of the Danes but also to help the king to fight the noble opposition⁵⁷.

At the same time when the Swedish fleet was fighting with the Russians near the island of Hogland, Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein reminded the French Minister of Foreign Affairs that Russia had been interfering in the internal affairs of Sweden, Russian troops had been concentrated on the Finnish border and the court of St. Petersburg had been preparing for war. Armand Marc de Montmorin, however, did not change his mind and did not want to believe that there existed a possibility of Sweden being attacked by Russian troops. The French minister returned once more to the Turkish case and stated that his court tried to restore peace in the East and expected

⁵⁷ See H.A. Barton, *Scandinavia...*, pp. 159–163; G.J. Adlerbeth, *Historiska anteckningar*, E. Tégner (ed.), 2nd ed., vol. I, Stockholm 1892, p. 46; I. de Madariaga, *op. cit.*, p. 402; E. Lönnroth, *op. cit.*, p. 107; R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, pp. 29–37; A. Kersten, *Historia Szwecji*, Wrocław 1973, pp. 283–284; I. Andersson, *Dzieje Szwecji*, Warszawa 1967, p. 229; E. Tégner, *op. cit.*, pp. 259–263; Gustav III to G.M. Armfelt, Leksand, September 15, 1788, *Bref till Armfelt*, pp. 36–39; Z. Anusik, *Geneza...*, pp. 60–61; idem, *Przykład...*, s. 174–175.

to achieve that goal in the next year. On that occasion, Montmorin expressed great dissatisfaction with the Swedish envoy to Istanbul. According to him, Johan Gerhard von Heidenstam encouraged the Turks to continue war with the imperial courts and told them that France was a bad ally who was demanding from them more and more sacrifices. Staël defended his colleague and replied that in the event of the Swedish-Russian war the court of Stockholm would not be interested in peace between Turkey and the imperial courts. He added that he knew nothing about Heidenstam's actions but as Choiseul-Gouffier had urged Turkey to start war with Russia the benefits of maintaining an alliance with France must appear questionable to the Turks. Staël von Holstein once again emphasised that the French ministry had been convinced for a long time that Gustav III was cooperating with England. The ambassador tried to disprove it but his arguments did not convince Montmorin. It seemed that the French minister trusted more his *chargé d'affaires* at Stockholm than the representative of Sweden in Paris. A few days after the conversation described above, on July 25, 1788, Chevalier Jean de Gaussen wrote that Gustav III had asked France for help only to have a convenient excuse for breaking an old alliance. According to Gaussen, the king promised the British that if he received a negative response from the court of Versailles, he would break the understanding with France and make an alliance with the St. James court. Although it was not true, the attitude of the Minister of Foreign Affairs to Staël von Holstein became much more prejudiced. In the meantime, news about first armed clashes in the Swedish-Russian war started to arrive to Paris. According to the Swedish ambassador, the French public opinion was interested in that war and wished the victory of the court of Stockholm. Yet, the cabinet of Versailles had a different view on that matter. When Staël von Holstein sent an official note to the French court and asked whether Sweden could count on its support in the war against Russia, on August 10, 1788 he received a decidedly negative response. It was clear that the court of Versailles did not treat Gustav III as a victim of the Swedish-Russian conflict and did not feel obliged to fulfil obligations of the treaty of 1784. However, in the same document it was written that France would renew treaties with Sweden when the old ones expired. The entire document made a bad impression on the ambassador, though. The court of Versailles refused to fulfil those treaty obligations that were most wanted by Gustav III. For Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein the French answer was a prelude to the break of an alliance with Sweden. He immediately wrote to London to Gustaf Adam von Nolcken and informed him about the current state of relations with the court of Versailles. In view of the negative position of France, the possible success of Gustav III in war against Russia depended to large extent on the outcome of Nolcken's negotiations in London. According

to the Ambassador to Paris, an alliance with England was to be a compensation for losing France's friendship. Staël knew that the cabinet of Versailles did not want the Swedish-English agreement to be made, thus, he warned Nolcken that the French would do everything to hinder his negotiations with the English court⁵⁸.

Although Staël von Holstein was convinced that an alliance with England would be better than an old alliance with France, he did everything that could ensure support to Gustav III in his war against Russia. On August 14, 1788 he wrote to the king that he was doing everything possible to persuade the French ministry to grant extraordinary subsidies to Sweden. He also tried to persuade Montmorin that an alliance with Sweden was essential for France to maintain balance in the North and curb Russia's ambitions. He justified his king's behaviour and explained that Gustav III could not have known that France would remain indifferent to the fate of Turkey because no one had bothered to inform him of the change in the French political system. According to Staël, defensive actions of the Swedish king were in line with the old policy of France in the North and did not violate conditions of the treaty of 1784. The ambassador once again tried to convince his interlocutor that Russia was an aggressor in that war. He finally asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs whether France, for the third time in such a short time, intended to abandon its next ally that turned to it for help. Staël was convinced that his arguments made a great impression on the minister who promised to consider that matter at the next meeting of the Royal Council. Yet, the Swedish diplomat had no illusions about the final decision of the cabinet of Versailles. Later in his message, he wrote that France, due to its internal difficulties, would avoid any activities in the international arena. Montmorin was only looking for a convenient excuse to refuse to fulfil treaty obligations to the court of Stockholm and thus he was playing for time. According to Staël, the minister did not seem worried about his statement that there remained nothing else for Sweden but to find a new ally. The court of Versailles believed that good Swedish-French relations would be soon restored. The French sense of confidence seemed to stem from the fact that although Louis XVI rejected the Stockholm court's request for an additional financial support, he was still eager to renew old subsidy treaties with Gustav III on the existing terms and conditions. The prospect of obtaining additional French subsidies in the future influenced Staël's behaviour. He started to assure his interlocutors that the court of Stockholm was ready

⁵⁸ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, July 17, 1788, RA, Gallica vol. 471; J. de Gaussen to A.M. de Montmorin, Stockholm, July 25, 1788 as cited in A. Söderhjelm, *op. cit.*, p. 96; E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, August 7, 1788, RA, Gallica vol. 471; Copie de la lettre au Baron de Nolcken à Londres, an enclosure to E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, August 10, 1788, *ibidem*.

to maintain an alliance with France. At the same time, however, he warned them that it would be only their fault if the King of Sweden was forced to seek a new political system. Arguments of the Swedish diplomat had little impact on decisions made in the French ministry, though. The French were well aware of their helplessness. At exactly the same time, on August 17, 1788, Armand Marc de Montmorin wrote to the French Ambassador to Stockholm, Louis Marc, Marquis of Pons: "All new combinations in the European political system are contradictory to the views of His Majesty. He accepts them only because he was forced to do so by the behaviour of his enemies and the fact that he was abandoned by his former allies"⁵⁹.

A few days later Staël von Holstein received orders from July 26. Gustav III asked France for help in restoring peace with Russia. The ambassador immediately asked for a meeting with Montmorin from whom he heard that peace in the North should be made in the upcoming winter. The French envoy to St. Petersburg, the Count of Ségur, was not, according to Staël, a suitable peace negotiator for Sweden, thus, he suggested the minister to send to Russia a new diplomat. In the same message, Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein wrote about a growing tension in relations between Austria and Holland. In Paris, the rumour had it that France would like to be a part of that conflict, as there were orders issued to concentrate military forces in Flanders. Staël, however, did not attach importance to those rumours. He concentrated on the negotiations made by Gustaf Adam von Nolcken in London. On August 21 he sent him a letter in which he expressed a concern that London talks did not bring results expected by Gustav III. The Ambassador to Paris was surprised that the English were reluctant to take the opportunity of depriving France of its oldest and only ally. He also assured his colleague from London that in the near future one should not expect any active action on the part of France which was preoccupied with its internal problems. He reminded him that the French government wanted to prevent the English-Swedish alliance. Staël also advised Nolcken to establish a closer relationship with the Duke of Dorset whom he had met in Paris and of whom he knew that he did not like the Russians. In his second letter to the Swedish envoy to London, dated August 24, Staël von Holstein informed him that France was considering the war with Holland. Yet, he wrote that if the war was started, the only reason for it would be to distract the public attention from unresolved internal problems. The government wanted an easy victory, but the public opinion was strongly opposed to it and it was afraid of the consequences which it would entail. Staël expected, though, that the Franco-Dutch conflict would accelerate talks in London. He claimed that if the war was to break out, the

⁵⁹ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, August 14 and 17, 1788, RA, Gallica vol. 471; A.M. de Montmorin to L.M. de Pons, Paris, August 17, 1788 as cited in A. Söderhjelm, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

cabinet of St. James should take advantage of it and make an alliance with Sweden. In his message to Gustav III, written on the same day, Staël informed him that he had sent letters to Nolcken which should facilitate his negotiations in London. He also emphasised that he supported an alliance with England and believed that it would be more attractive for Sweden, especially as no favourable proposals should be expected from France in the near future. Staël von Holstein expressed similar opinions in his letters to Nolcken and the king, the former dated August 27 and the latter August 31, 1788. He also tried to convince both of his correspondents that Jacques Necker's presence in the French ministry should make the cabinet of London finalise negotiations with Sweden⁶⁰.

In early September 1788 the news of the revolt in the Finnish army and Gustav III's critical position reached Paris. In his message to the king, Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein expressed his outrage at those events which, in his opinion, had to be provoked by the Russians. He also assured the king of his boundless devotion for him and the country. After having received distressing news from Stockholm, the ambassador went to Montmorin to explain him that Gustav III's desperate situation required an immediate restoration of peace with Russia. The French minister showed great interest in it and promised to do everything to help the Swedish king. The court of Versailles sent a courier to St. Petersburg and asked it to accept the French mediation. The Minister of Foreign Affairs also promised to put pressure on Catherine II but without resorting to hostilities. Montmorin asked Staël about the conditions under which the court of Stockholm would like to restore peace with Russia. The ambassador said that France should persuade Catherine II into passing some of her territories to Sweden, lowering her demands towards Turkey and giving up the idea that the future peace should be guaranteed by Swedish estates. Montmorin said, however, that in the present situation he would not mention two first terms to the empress. The third condition was possible to obtain, though. Staël, in accordance with previous orders, requested once more to exclude the Count of Ségur from future peace negotiations. The French minister, however, was satisfied with his envoy to the court of St. Petersburg and did not want to exclude him from negotiations with the empress. However, he assured Staël that Ségur would receive detailed instructions to follow. At the end of his message, Staël von Holstein promised to do everything in his power to get a *bona officia* from France.

⁶⁰ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, August 21, 24 and 31, 1788, RA, Gallica vol. 471; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 88–89; E.M. Staël v. Holstein to G.A. v. Nolcken in London, Paris, August 21 and 24, 1788 (copies), E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, August 24, 1788, apostille No. 1 and 2, RA, Gallica vol. 471; E.M. Staël v. Holstein to G.A. v. Nolcken in London, Paris, August 27, 1788 (a copy), E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, August 28, 1788, apostille, *ibidem*.

He asked, however, for detailed instructions on what steps to take concerning the French court. In his next letter from Paris, the ambassador wrote that the French Minister of Foreign Affairs had asked him whether it would be beneficial to the interests of Sweden if Catherine II guaranteed the form of the government of 1772. Staël categorically refused to continue that conversation as he had no appropriate orders concerning that matter. On September 14, 1788, when an internal crisis in Sweden was at its high point, Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein unexpectedly asked Gustav III for a three-month leave and named Aron Isak Silfversparre, the former Secretary of Legation in Paris, as his temporary successor. While he was waiting for an answer from Stockholm, he still continued talks with the Minister of Foreign Affairs. They concentrated on both, the French mediation in peace negotiations with Russia and the extension of old subsidy treaties. The latter issue, however, was dominated by reports on the Swedish-Russian war. On September 18 Staël von Holstein wrote that Montmorin told him that he had received new alarming news from Sweden. The minister immediately informed Louis XVI about it. The French king showed great compassion at the misfortune of his oldest ally and ordered his ministry to help him at all costs⁶¹. Gustav III's only hope for salvation seemed to depend on the support of foreign courts. A week later Sweden was invaded by Danish troops.

THE DANISH INVASION OF SWEDEN: THE KING'S FIGHT WITH THE NOBLE OPPOSITION

Although after his return to Sweden in September 1788 Gustav III immediately began preparations to defend the southern provinces, he was not ready to stop regular Danish forces. Sir Hugh Elliot, the English envoy to Copenhagen, was well aware of it. Therefore, on September 16 he had a long conversation with Andreas Peter von Bernstorff and he threatened him that Prussia and England would intervene if Denmark did not stop its war preparations. As he had not received any satisfactory answer, he went to Sweden where he intended to meet with Gustav III on his own responsibility without any instructions from London. He aimed to persuade the Swedish king to accept the mediation of the Triple Alliance and break his alliance with France. The task of the English diplomat was easier as on September 24, 1788 Danish corps of ten thousand soldiers commanded by Charles, Prince of Hesse crossed the Swedish border and moved towards Gothenburg.

⁶¹ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, September 3, 7, 14 and 18, 1788, RA, Gallica vol. 471. It is worth noting that the news of the proposal of the French mediation in the Russo-Swedish war was received by King of Sweden on September 22, 1788. See Gustav III to G.M. Armfelt, Norrbärke, September 22, 1788, *Bref till Armfelt*, p. 40.

Gustav III had at his disposal only four thousand poorly equipped soldiers. On September 29 the Danes surprised the Swedes near Kvistrum and captured 800 prisoners and ten cannons. Gothenburg's fate seemed sealed when fortresses Vänersborg and Elfsborg surrounded. At the same time, however, Elliot met with the king in the Swedish town of Karlstad. After having listened to the arguments of the Englishman, Gustav III faced a difficult choice. The English-Prussian mediation could in fact jeopardise an old alliance with France which country the Stockholm court had already asked for a mediation in peace talks with Russia. On the other hand, the French mediation could encourage the Triple Alliance to withdraw its offer. Gustav III could not allow it. Thus, he decided to accept the proposal of the English diplomat. The royal decision was explained by his trusted associate, Ulric Gustaf Franc, who wrote on September 29, 1788 to Niklas von Jakobson: "It is believed here that France has neither the strength nor the desire to run atilt in honour of our love. Its domestic troubles, ruined finances and an influence of the queen, the emperor's sister, all this make us fear that France will do nothing more but give a *bona officia*, make memorials and persuasions which are sure not to bother the empress. And when all of its *bona officia* prove useless, it is expected that France will end its mediation and advise us to submit to the exorbitant demands of our enemy. That is what is generally thought of France here. It is also believed that Necker is certainly a great man but not a wizard and he will not be able to restore the state's power within eight days. And even if it was possible, the queen would surely suppress all decisions that would be taken to help us if the mediation did not produce the desired effect". On September 30 Gustav III wrote to Carl Axel, Count von Wachtmeister, that after long discussions with his advisers he decided to accept the mediation of England, Prussia and Holland. In the same letter the king wrote that Sir Hugh Elliot went to the headquarters of the Prince von Hesse to persuade him to stop hostilities and an offensive of his troops. Elliot's mission was a complete success. On October 9, 1788 the English diplomat negotiated a truce which was then successively extended until the signing of the convention of Uddevalla (dated November 6, 1788). It provided the suspension of hostilities for a period of six months and a definitive evacuation of Danish troops from Sweden⁶².

⁶² See I. de Madariaga, *op. cit.*, p. 402; A. Söderhjelm, *op. cit.*, pp. 101, 105; H.A. Barton, *Scandinavia...*, pp. 160–161; idem, *Gustav III...*, p. 26; E. Lönnroth, *op. cit.*, pp. 107–108; U.G. Franc to N. v. Jakobson, Karlstad, September 29, 1788 as cited in A. Söderhjelm, *op. cit.*, p. 106; Z. Anusik, *Geneza...*, pp. 61–62; idem, *Przykład...*, pp. 175–176; Gustav III to C.A. Wachtmeister, Karlstad, September 30, 1788, in: *Kon. Gustaf III:s bref till Riks-Drotsen Grefve Carl Axel Wachtmeister och Stats-Sekreteraren Ulric Gustaf Franc, efter handskrifter på Trolle Ljungby* [further on: *Bref till Wachtmeister-Franc*], G. Andersson (ed.), Örebro 1860, p. 32; R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, pp. 38–44; E. Tegnér, *op. cit.*, pp. 263–277. See also Gustav III to G.M. Armfelt, Göteborg, October 9, 12,

At the same time when Hugh Elliot took action to support Sweden, Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein had another meeting with the French Minister of Foreign Affairs. In early October he informed Montmorin that Gustav III was willing to accept the English mediation in war with Russia. Montmorin was not content and threatened that if Sweden adopted the English mediation, France would have to suspend its actions in St. Petersburg. As to avoid an open conflict, Staël tried to convince the minister that the court of Stockholm had not changed its view on the alliance with France. Montmorin refrained from expressing his opinion but again warned Staël against making an alliance with England. Fortunately for Gustav III, French subsidies were paid to Sweden on time. On October 9, 1788 Staël informed the king that the day before he had handed a banker, Grand, the money order for an amount of 675 thousand *livres* and commanded him to send it to Sweden. He also assured his lord that he could count on the renewal of the treaty of 1783 that provided to Sweden subsidies of 1,5 million *livres* a year. He only had to convince the French that Sweden was interested in maintaining an old alliance. He expressed similar opinions on the subsidy treaty in his next messages. The Swedish diplomat also supposed that Catherine II would not accept any foreign mediation and would only agree on the French *bona officia*. He advised Gustav III to decline an offer of the courts of London and Berlin and put the blame for it on the Russian court. In mid-October the news that Gustav III had agreed on a *bona officia* of London and Berlin arrived to Paris. Thus, Staël started to convince the French ministry that it should not feel offended by it because it was the mediation of countries that could use force as to support their arguments. The Swedish ambassador's explanations were received coldly by Montmorin. He said that the tone of the Prussian king's note would only make the empress angry and thus she would prefer to continue the war in the name of self-love rather than accept his mediation. Still, Staël did not seem to worry about the French minister's confession. He wrote to Gustav III that although France was offended by the withdrawal of the country from the mediation, its internal affairs would force it to swallow that bitter pill and prevent it from taking an active part in the international affairs. At that time, an alliance with England seemed to Staël much more favourable to Sweden than an illusory alliance with the court of Versailles. He came to the conclusion that at a time when both, France and Sweden were

16 and 19, 1788, *Bref till Armfelt*, pp. 44–50. It should be noted that since mid-October the Prussian envoy to Stockholm, Adrian Heinrich von Borcke, had participated in negotiations with the Danes. He supported Elliott in his efforts to persuade the Prince von Hesse to evacuate the Danish troops from Sweden. See A.H. v. Borcke to Gustav III, Göteborg, October 25, 1788 and enclosed to that letter "Précis de la réponse finale de S.M. Danoise à S.M. le Roy de Prusse donnée le 22 Octob.", RA, Borussica vol. 180.

plunged into crisis, the latter had to look for new political solutions different from those that were appropriate in the era of universal peace⁶³.

In November and December 1788 there were held negotiations aimed at bringing the war in the East and the North to the end. Catherine II was initially furious at an offer of the English-Prussian mediation. The empress preferred a war with the Triple Alliance to the resignation from almost a certain victory over Sweden and expected success in the war with Turkey. Thus, she informed the court of Berlin that the entry of Prussian troops to the Danish Holstein would be taken as a hostile step against Russia. However, unexpected attempts of Poland that in the autumn of 1788 tried to throw off the Russian protectorate, as well as the Russian failure in the Turkish war, made the empress postpone dealings with Prussia. Catherine II did not accept the English-Prussian mediation but at the same time she also refused the French *bona officia*. On November 20, 1788 Staël von Holstein, who had been ordered by Gustav III to closely cooperate with envoys of England and Prussia to Paris, wrote to Stockholm that Russia's response had been badly received by the French ministry. Thus, the ambassador took appropriate steps and tried to discourage Montmorin from cooperating with Russia. Yet, the Swedish-French relations were extremely tense and both sides were observing each other's actions with distrust. At the turn of November and December 1788 Staël von Holstein was not far from the court of Versailles, as he negotiated with an experienced French diplomat, an eminent expert on Turkish problems, Georg Josef, Baron von Brentano, conditions under which he would start the Swedish service. Although it was baron's initiative, his realignment was carried out in the deepest secret, without the knowledge or the consent of Armand Marc de Montmorin. At the beginning of December Brentano moved secretly from Paris to meet with the King of Sweden with whom he had to agree on the details of the planned trip to Istanbul. At the same time, on December 3, 1788, Gustav III ordered his Ambassador to Paris to find out how the court of Versailles would behave if Prussian troops entered into the territory of Denmark. At the end of December 1788 Staël answered the king's question. In his opinion, the French government, preoccupied with its internal problems, did not intend to defend Denmark. Although France and Denmark tried to cooperate in the past because of the Swedish king's troubles, that cooperation ended when the Danish army had invaded Sweden. The court of Versailles did not want to further strengthen its relations with the court of Copenhagen as Denmark had shown her weakness. According to the Swedish diplomat, there was no reason to fear any French intervention supporting Gustav III's enemies. He was more worried

⁶³ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, October 2, 9, 16, 23 and November 9, 13, 1788, RA, Gallica vol. 471; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 91–92.

with French financial obligations to Sweden. In early January 1789 he wrote that he had given Grand more banker's orders for 675 thousand *livres* which were to be paid to the King of Sweden on February 14. Staël worried, however, about the last instalment (600 thousand *livres*) of extraordinary subsidies granted to Gustav III by Louis XVI in 1784. On January 14 he wrote that due to the acute financial crisis the French government would have a good excuse for not paying the court of Stockholm money owed to Sweden⁶⁴.

Gustav III was worried about France's behaviour in the event of the Prussian-Danish conflict, whereas the French Minister of Foreign Affairs was afraid of the rapprochement between the court of Stockholm and the Triple Alliance countries. On January 15, 1789 Armand Marc de Montmorin wrote to the Marquis of Pons and told him to find out, at all costs, to what extent the Prussian king was involved in the Swedish affairs and whether he would support Sweden, if the use of force was needed. Pons was also ordered to find out how profound the London court's influence on the court of Stockholm was. The minister was especially eager to find out whether the court of St. James inspired recent political decisions of Gustav III. Although Montmorin was interested in the situation in Stockholm, the court of Versailles avoided concrete actions. France still did not intend to actively defend its Scandinavian ally. On February 8, 1789 the Count of Montmorin wrote to the Marquis of Pons: "We are interested in the peace in the North more than ever before". Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein was well aware of the attitude of the French ministry. On January 17, 1789 he wrote to Gustav III that the French envoy to St. Petersburg was to declare that his court did not intend to interfere in the pacification of the North. Staël considered it as a betrayal of the Swedish interest especially as Montmorin was waiting to see what the course of action would be and did not doubt Ségur's actions in St. Petersburg. At the same time news of the capture of Ochakov by Russian troops reached Paris. The Swedish ambassador suggested that it could hasten the end of the eastern war. Staël saw a chance to checkmate Russia, though. He supported the idea of a closer cooperation between Sweden, Prussia and Poland. He predicted, however, that Catherine II would attempt to pull away Prussia from other two countries for which an alliance with the court of Berlin was the only chance to preserve the sovereignty. The Swedish diplomat was also afraid that the empress could resort to the help of many friends, supporters and spies that she had managed to recruit in different countries. Staël's biggest concern was the prospect of the Turkish defeat, though. He assumed that after having defeated the sultan, Catherine II would take revenge on her other enemies. The prospect of a revenge over Sweden seemed real, as

⁶⁴ See I. de Madariaga, *op. cit.*, p. 403; R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, pp. 45–46; E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, November 20, 27 and December 4, 25, 1788, RA, Gallica vol. 471; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, p. 92; E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, January 8 and 14, 1789, RA, Gallica vol. 472.

France was departing from its former ally's policy. On January 25 Staël von Holstein wrote that since the taking of Ochakov the court of Versailles had been doing everything to cooperate with Russia. France wanted to maintain peace at all costs. It was the main reason why it became closer to the St. Petersburg court. As there was no chance to weaken France's relations with the imperial courts and rebuild an old Franco-Prussian alliance, Staël considered the Swedish alliance with the court of Versailles useless. According to him, England and Prussia were the only major powers that could resist imperial aspirations of Russia. Thus, Staël von Holstein once again urged Gustav III to make an alliance with the courts of London and Berlin. He dispelled his fears by saying that as soon as France overcame its internal difficulties and regained its rightful place in Europe, it would be willing to be reconciled with Sweden. For the time being, however, the king should stick to another political system. Staël expressed similar opinion in his message dated January 29, 1789. He wrote that France, despite its best efforts, would not be able to provide an honorary peace to Sweden. In his deep conviction, only England and Prussia could help the court of Stockholm to achieve that goal. Thus, the ambassador once again tried to convince his lord to sign a formal treaty with the Triple Alliance countries⁶⁵.

At the same time when Staël von Holstein encouraged Gustav III to change the existing system of alliances, both, the internal and the international situation of Sweden considerably improved. After the truce with Denmark the king could entirely concentrate on the situation in Finland. The passiveness of the Russian army, which had not even tried to cross the border river Kymmene, allowed Gustav III to dispose of the confederation of Anjala members. The first arrests started in October 1788. Officers had been gradually arrested until February 1789. In late November 1788 the most disgraced Major Johan Anders Jägerhorn, the initiator of the meeting in Liikala and the conspirators' delegate to St. Petersburg, escaped to Russia and began military service in Catherine II's army. When Gustav III was fighting with the opposition of noble officers from the Finnish army he deliberately fostered social antagonism and aroused dislike of the privileged among three lower estates. He also proclaimed a convocation of the *Riksdag* at the beginning of December 1788. He planned to introduce constitutional changes that were to include a considerable extension of prerogatives of the crown. As the king was well aware of the attitude of the nobility, he knew that his plans would encounter fierce opposition from representatives of the first estate. Predictions of the king proved reasonable. On January 26, 1789 estates gathered in Stockholm. It turned out then that among 950 members of the House of the

⁶⁵ See A.M. de Montmorin to L.M. de Pons, Paris, January 15 and February 8, 1789 as cited in A. Söderhjelm, *op. cit.*, p. 110; E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, January 17, 25 and 29, 1789, RA, Gallica vol. 472; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 94–97.

Knights more than 700 decidedly opposed to the ruler. Thanks to his earlier actions, though, the king could count on the support of representatives of the unprivileged estates as their electoral instructions told them to vote for new taxes and demand punishment of treacherous officers. When the *Riksdag* started on February 2 there was a disagreement between the House of the Knights and the government that was supported by three lower estates. The objection of noble deputies paralysed the machinery of legislation. It was impossible to come to an agreement with the noble estate. Thus, Gustav III decided to stage another coup d'état. He sent to Drottningholm 1,2 thousand volunteers from Dalarna who were commanded by Gustaf Mauritz Armfelt. He also mobilised the bourgeois militia of Stockholm. He was sure of the support of no aristocratic deputies. Thus, on February 17, 1789 he accused the nobility and ordered its representatives to leave the room of the *Riksdag's* plenary sessions. Then, the king thanked representatives of three lower estates and promised them to abolish all class privileges. As the nobility was not intimidated by Gustav III's speech and still was undermining all his moves, on February 20, 1789 the king ordered the house arrest for 19 of the most active leaders of the opposition. The next day, on February 21, 1789, Gustav III presented to the *Riksdag* an amendment to the constitution of 1772, called the "Act of Unity and Security". It was adopted by acclamation (with loud protests from noble deputies) during the plenary session of the Parliament. It gave much more power to the royal authority. The role of the *Riksdag* was to be further reduced. At the same time the nobility lost many privileges. Only the highest offices were still reserved for representatives of that estate. The coup from February 21, 1789 restored the royal absolutism. Yet, the abolition of most privileges of the nobility opened the way for the capitalist mode of production in the Swedish countryside. Paradoxically, Gustav III, the future fierce enemy of the French Revolution, started in 1789 the same socio-economic transformation that soon was to be initiated in France. Finally, despite the fierce opposition of the House of the Knights, which refused to sanction the "Act of Unity and Security", the king managed to force it to adopt the tax resolution so favourable to him. In that situation, on April 28, 1789, he dissolved the *Riksdag*. A few days later, on May 11, 1789, Gustav III abolished the State Council. The Swedish aristocracy lost its last bastion of influence and importance in the country. No one had the slightest doubt that all power had been concentrated in the king's hands⁶⁶.

⁶⁶ See C.T. Odhner, *op. cit.*, vol. III, pp. 259–261; L. Stavenow, *op. cit.*, pp. 172–187; H. Almquist, *Anjalamännen på Fredrikshov. Ett 150-årsminne*, no place, 1939; I. de Madariaga, *op. cit.*, p. 409; *Berättelse om Riksdagen i Stockholm 1789, af Olof Wallquist*, in: *Historiska Handlingar*, vol. V, Stockholm 1866, pp. 237–466; *Protocoll hållet på Riks-Salen i Stockholm 2, 3, 17, 21 Febr. och 28 Aprill 1789*, in: *ibidem*, pp. 155–237; G. Landberg, *Den svenska riksdagen under den gustavianska tiden*, in: *Sveriges riksdag. Historisk och statsvetenskaplig*

BETWEEN WAR AND PEACE: PREPARATIONS FOR THE CAMPAIGN OF 1789

When Gustav III was fighting with the noble opposition, Staël von Holstein closely observed actions of the court of Versailles. The French public opinion, despite the pro-Russian attitude of its government, sympathised with Gustav III and wished him victory in war with Catherine II. Some volunteers were even willing to serve the Swedish king, among them François Claude Amour, Marquis of Bouillé. Yet, an offer of the general was not accepted. The Swedish ambassador was also deeply interested in France's attitude towards the Triple Alliance's mediation in the Swedish-Russian war. In mid-February 1789 he wrote that the cabinet of Versailles, which consistently wanted to restore peace, would not probably hinder negotiations between Russia, Sweden, England and Prussia. Staël predicted, however, that France would aspire to be a mediator in negotiations between Turkey and the imperial courts and would do everything to prevent England and Prussia from participating in them. In early March 1789 Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein met in Paris with Karl Heinrich von Nassau-Siegen who had just begun the Russian service. He heard from him that Russia was intensively preparing itself for the future campaign against Sweden. It seemed dangerous to him, especially when Saint-Priest tried hard to convince the French ministry to make a quadruple alliance of Paris, Madrid, Vienna and St. Petersburg. As he was convinced of the benefits of an alliance with England, Staël tried to gain private access to William Pitt. He even managed to get to someone from the circles close to the English prime minister. The name of that person, however, was not revealed in his messages to the court of Stockholm. At the same time Georg Josef, Baron von Brentano returned to France. On March 6, 1789 Staël von Holstein informed Gerhard Johan von Heidenstam from Istanbul that the baron entered the Swedish service and would be sent on a special mission to the capital of Turkey. In his letter he

främställning, vol. VII, Stockholm 1932, pp. 77–109; W. Tham, *Konung Gustaf III och rikets ständer vid 1789 års riksdag*, Stockholm 1866; C. Nordmann, *Gustave III. Un démocrate couronné*, Lille 1986, pp. 175–192 (Chapter X: *L'Acte d'union et de sûreté*); S. Carlsson, J. Rosén, *op. cit.*, p. 241 and fol.; R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, pp. 47–77. For the "Act of Unity and Security" (translated into French) see The Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw (Archiwum Głównie Akt Dawnych w Warszawie), the Public Archives of Potocki's Family (Archiwum Publiczne Potockich), No. 227, pp. 1080–1089. A copy of Gustav III's regulation that established the Supreme Judicial Court in the place of the Senate that was dissolved by the decree of May 11, 1789 see *ibidem*, pp. 1089–1090. See also O. Jägerskiöld, *Den svenska...*, p. 328; B. Hennings, *op. cit.*, pp. 288–295; A. Kersten, *op. cit.*, pp. 284–286; A. Geffroy, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 74–88; Z. Anusik, *Przykład...*, pp. 177–180. The importance of the reforms conducted by Gustav III after the coup of 1789 see J.P. Findeisen, „Królewski rewolucjonista”. *Król Gustaw III u progu kapitalistycznej przebudowy szwedzkiego systemu feudalnego (1771–1792)*, „Zapiski Historyczne”, vol. LXII, 1997, issue 2–3, pp. 69–85. It also includes an extensive discussion of the literature.

asked the envoy to Istanbul to welcome him. He also warned his colleague that the Ambassador of France, Marie Gabriel de Choiseul-Gouffier, would try to interfere in the mission of the Baron von Brentano. Staël explained to Heidenstam how important it was for Sweden that Turkey should not make separate peace with Russia as the French diplomacy wished. He asked him to assure the Turks that Gustav III was their ally and would further strengthen relations with them in the near future. Finally, Staël von Holstein concluded on the situation of the Ottoman Empire. He stated that poor Turks had in France a declared enemy, although they naively believed that the French were still their friends⁶⁷.

In his next messages, Staël informed the court of Stockholm that he had huge problems with obtaining a passport for the Baron von Brentano. Montmorin wanted to keep him in the French service and was looking for an excuse to deny him the right to enter the Swedish service. During a conversation with the ambassador the minister was surprised that Brentano wanted to leave France as he was still in the king's service and had not demanded to be dismissed yet. Staël defended the baron, who had already secretly left France without notifying French authorities about his departure, and said that he was not the French subject and could change his employer whenever he wanted. Montmorin suspected what was to be Brentano's mission in Istanbul and accused the court of Stockholm that it was doing everything to prolong the Turkish war while France wanted a quick peace. When Staël asked the French minister about the quadruple alliance he received the answer that recent developments in the international arena made France seriously consider the proposal of the imperial courts. In that situation, the ambassador tried to convince his interlocutor of negative consequences of the Franco-Russian alliance. He stated that France could come into conflict with other countries, if it signed the treaty with the imperial courts. Staël also warned Montmorin against France's entanglement in an unnecessary war with Holland in the name of Austrian interests. Finally, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs tried to warn the Swedish diplomat against an alliance of the Stockholm court, England and Prussia. He did not convince the ambassador, though. The latter saw the weakness and the inconsistency of the court of Versailles and believed that an old alliance with France should be replaced with the Triple Alliance. Thus, Staël established very good relations with the Prussian envoy to Paris, Bernhard Wilhelm von der Goltz. At the same time, the ambassador was still interested in the Turkish case. In his message from March 19, he recommended to the king Ignatius

⁶⁷ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, February 1, 15 and March 5, 1789, RA, Gallica vol. 472; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 97–98; Copie af brefvet till Heidenstam, Paris, March 6, 1789, E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, March 12, 1789, apostille, RA, Gallica vol. 472; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, p. 98.

Mouradgea d'Ohsson, an eminent expert on Turkey who translated all letters from the Baron von Brentano. Mouradgea used his old connections in Istanbul and on his own initiative had already written to the *reis effendi* trying to persuade the Divan to fulfil all treaty obligations to Sweden. He also advised the baron to give the Great Vizier Gustav III's portrait in the frame with diamonds. Staël, on his own responsibility, ordered to prepare that portrait in the Hague and spent 13,5 thousand *livres* for that purpose. The ambassador feared, however, that the French, who were consistent in their trials to weaken the influence of the court of Stockholm in Istanbul, would manage to stop the special envoy of the Swedish king. Fortunately, Brentano avoided all dangers and crossed the Swiss border just in time. On March 26, 1789 Staël von Holstein contentedly informed Gustav III about the baron's stay in Lausanne. At the beginning of April the ambassador dealt with the case which had agitated the Stockholm court. The February coup d'état in Stockholm was unfavourably described in many French newspapers. Thus, Staël bribed a well-known journalist, Jacques Mallet du Pan, an editor of the "Mercure de France", who promised to write about Swedish events in line with expectations of the court of Stockholm. At the same time Staël received a brochure about the history of Catherine II's reign which he had ordered at the beginning of the Swedish-Russian war. It presented the empress in a very unfavourable light, thus, the ambassador ordered to print it outside France, as he feared the reaction of the pro-Russian court of Versailles⁶⁸.

On April 16, 1789 Staël von Holstein wrote to the king about his next meeting with the Prince von Nassau who after his earlier visit to Madrid was going to St. Petersburg. The prince expected to arrive to the Russian capital in mid-May. He informed the ambassador about armaments made by the court of St. Petersburg. According to him, the empress decided to use in her next campaign the fleet of lines which was to be much stronger than the Swedish one. The Russian coastal fleet was to be capable of taking aboard 12 thousand soldiers. Nassau told Staël that the empress, who was determined to fight with Sweden by all possible means until the victorious end, entrusted him with the command of that fleet. It was also clear that the Russians were counting on the possibility of using the noble opposition to paralyse Swedish war preparations. They were convinced that since the confederation of Anjala Gustav III did not confide in senior officers of his army. Thus, Nassau-Siegen also expected an easy victory over weak and demoralised Swedish forces. Staël obviously did not share his opinion and

⁶⁸ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, March 8, 12, 19, 26 and April 2, 1789, RA, Gallica vol. 472; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 98–99. Gustav III was hugely interested in efforts made by Staël von Holstein as he was very concerned about his image, both, at home and abroad. For more information on the propaganda of the Stockholm court during the war with Russia see S. Boberg, *Kunglig krigspropaganda*, Göteborg 1967.

in his message he only described the discussion with the prince. He was much more interested in information from Vienna. The French ambassador, Emmanuel Marie, Marquis of Noailles, reported that the emperor was so seriously ill that his death was expected at any moment. Staël predicted that the death of Joseph II would have a great impact on the course of European events. He supposed that it would be difficult for Catherine II to maintain the alliance with Austria and get further help from it. The brother and a successor of Joseph II, Leopold, Grand Duke of Tuscany, would probably change its policy. The ambassador welcomed an expected change to the imperial throne with great satisfaction. He expected that there would be a breach between Vienna and St. Petersburg. In his opinion, it should make Catherine II change her attitude towards England and Prussia. Although information about the death of the emperor turned out to be premature, Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein's predictions proved to be right. The policy of the court of Vienna had not changed until the spring of the next year, though. Yet, at the beginning of May 1789 Staël von Holstein had good news for the king. Firstly, the French ministry paid him another instalment of 300 thousand *livres* which he immediately sent to Stockholm via one of the Amsterdam banks. Secondly, the Swedish consul at Nice reported that on April 21 the Baron von Brentano had boarded a ship to Istanbul. Thirdly, Staël's intermediary managed to reach the English prime minister. Thus, the ambassador asked his court for permission to start preliminary negotiations with the court of London⁶⁹. At the beginning of May 1789 Staël von Holstein was optimistic and did not expect any unpleasant events in the international arena in the near future. However, the ambassador could not have predicted that in weeks to come he would have to pay more attention to the events in France that would be anxiously perceived by both, Stockholm and other European courts.

THE MINISTRY OF NECKER: THE TIME BEFORE THE FIRST MEETING OF THE ESTATES-GENERAL

Since the outbreak of the Swedish-Russian war the internal situation of France had not been the main point of interest of the Stockholm court. Gustav III was observing events taking place in that country through the prism of his own war failures. He expected from his recent ally a regular payment of subsidies and a diplomatic intervention both, in St. Petersburg and Copenhagen. When he realised that the court of Versailles would not support him he decided to turn to the Triple Alliance. Gustav III was not impressed by the fact that Necker was appointed the Controller-General of Finances. He did not believe neither that it would help France to quickly overcome its

⁶⁹ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, April 16, 26 and May 7, 1789, RA, Gallica vol. 472.

internal crisis nor that it would activate the French foreign policy. On September 15, 1788 the king not only informed Gustaf Mauritz Armfelt about the fall of the Archbishop of Sens and his replacement by Necker but also ironically noted: "Here, then, my ambassador's father-in-law is a treasurer of France; unfortunately, the treasure of the king, my ally, is as empty as my own". Thus, it is not surprising that Gustav III was only moderately interested in Staël von Holstein's reports on the developments on the French political scene. And things happening there were really interesting. Jacques Necker started his duty from recalling the judicial reform of Lamoignon and restoring the parliaments. The Keeper of the Seals, hated by the aristocratic and the parliamentary opposition, resigned soon. At the end of September 1788 Staël wrote to the king that, as Necker wished, until the convening of the Estates-General the justice system would operate according to the old rules. Financial matters were to remain unchanged until the representation of the French people was elected. According to Staël, Necker tried to save the Royal Treasury from bankruptcy by increasing revenue and reducing expenditure. The French bankers, however, wanted to be ensured that they would receive their money back. Thus, the minister had problems with obtaining a larger loan. Staël predicted that it would be difficult to reinforce the Royal Treasury as financiers were reluctant to give new loans and people expected that existing taxes would be reduced. He believed in the success of his father-in-law's plans, though, and noted with satisfaction that the queen had lost much of her influence on the new minister. In the same message, the ambassador warned Gustav III that Necker would also be a supporter of the peaceful foreign policy of France. He also tried to convince his ruler that there was no fear of the Estates-General, as they should help France to regain its position if only they were governed properly. From the very beginning the ambassador, influenced by his own father-in-law, was in favour of the idea to double the representation of the third estate in that assembly. He wrote that the parliaments had demanded (the Parliament of Paris had demanded it on September 25) that the Estates-General were convened as in 1614. According to him, it was a complete nonsense because France had profoundly changed since then. At the end of September 1788 Staël warned his king that Necker, annoyed by demands of the Parliament of Paris, intended to convene the new Assembly of Notables that would finally settle (in line with his vision, of course) that contentious issue⁷⁰.

⁷⁰ See Gustav III to G.M. Armfelt, Leksand, September 15, 1788, *Bref till Armfelt*, p. 39; E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, September 14 and 28, 1788, RA, Gallica vol. 471; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 89–91. See also J. Baszkiewicz, *Ludwik XVI*, p. 203; A. Mathiez, *La révolution française*, vol. I (*La chute de la royauté 1787–1792*), Paris 1928, p. 34; idem, *Rewolucja francuska*, Warszawa 1956, p. 34; A. Soboul, *op. cit.*, pp. 56–57.

On November 6, 1788 the Assembly of Notables, composed of the same notables as in 1787, gathered for the second time. Yet, it disappointed both, the minister and the Swedish ambassador. It turned out that conservative attitudes prevailed among notables this time. On November 9 Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein wrote that there was a fierce opposition of the nobility, the clergy and the parliaments against the idea of doubling the representation of the third estate. The vast majority of members of the assembly shared the similar view. On November 27 irritated Staël wrote to Gustav III that although the Assembly of Notables was still in session, discussions of its members did not have any result. They were driven solely by the corporate interest. The ambassador supposed that the assembly would be shortly dissolved as there was no agreement among the notables on the doubling of the representation of the third estate (a few noble reformers and a group of urban notables voted for it). Staël von Holstein considered notables' resistance to Necker's proposals as a political short-sightedness. In the same message, he wrote that it would be difficult to find another country which was plunged into such a deep crisis as France. According to Staël, at the end of 1788 the French suffered from a chronic lack of money in the treasury, extraordinary high prices, the collapse of the royal authority, which was caused by irrational abuses committed by previous ministers, and a growing conflict between the privileged and the third estate. The negative attitude of the Swedish diplomat to the Assembly of Notables was partly justified. Notables deepened the contradictions among estates instead of lowering them. On December 7, 1788 Staël von Holstein informed the court of Stockholm that the Assembly of Notables decided to convene the Estates-General as in 1614 and thus rejected the idea of doubling the representation of the third estate. In the same message, the ambassador wrote about a growing conflict of the privileged notables and notables representing the third estate. He also noticed that Louis XVI's brother, the Count of Provence (Monsieur), supported Necker's proposal. The second brother of the king, the Count of Artois, strongly defended interests of the first two estates, though. According to Staël, social tension in France would further increase, especially when the Assembly of Notables rejected Necker's proposal, and there was a moderate parliamentary opposition (on December 5, 1788 the Parliament of Paris adopted a compromise resolution on the number of deputies from the third estate but at the same time formulated moderately conservative programme of reforms). The ambassador thought that even a civil war could break out in France that would certainly put the monarchy in the great danger. Yet, he believed in his father-in-law who wanted consent and harmony for the crown. Staël also tried to convince Gustav III

that despite all conflicts Necker remained impartial and stuck to the principle of all great administrators not to become involved⁷¹.

Meanwhile, the situation in France had further complicated. On December 12, 1788 five princes of the blood, the Count of Artois among them, announced the manifesto in which they warned the king that a revolution could break out if he convened the Estates-General in a form proposed by Necker. Surprisingly, it did not attract attention of the Swedish ambassador. Perhaps he was convinced of an inevitable success of his father-in-law who in his fight with the conservative opposition could count on a strong support of the public opinion. In his message, dated December 18, Staël mainly wondered what would be the consequences for France's foreign policy of the Count of Saint-Priest's, a declared Russophile, introduction into the Royal Council. At the same time, Necker managed to convince Louis XVI to make a decision contrary to the position of notables and princes. On December 27, 1788, during the meeting of the Council, he pushed his project and doubled the representation of the third estate in the Estates-General. The Council also accepted the minister's proposal to elect deputies in proportion to the size of the population of the district (namely old areas of jurisdiction, so called bailiwicks). It agreed that the third estate could elect its deputies from the nobility and the clergy. Although Necker was supported by the public opinion, he feared to resolve the most important issue, namely whether the Estates-General should vote individually or by estates. He could not have known that old passions would be reborn because that fundamental issue remained unsolved. Staël von Holstein did not seem to be worried, either. On December 28, with certain satisfaction, he informed the court of Stockholm about an outcome of the last meeting of the Royal Council which turned out to be so favourable to Necker⁷².

At the end of January 1789 reports of the Swedish ambassador were not so optimistic. The aristocracy resisted desperately to Necker's innovations and increasing demands of the third estate. Local parliaments supported speeches against the government particularly in the estates provincial. This time, however, the nobility could not count on the support of the third estate. On the contrary, the privileged had to confront the crowd in many places. Particularly dangerous was a situation in Rennes where the nobility and its supporters had a regular battle with the local university's students

⁷¹ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, November 9, 27 and December 7, 1788, RA, Gallica vol. 471; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 91–93. See also J. Baszkiewicz, *Ludwik XVI*, pp. 207–208; A. Mathiez, *Rewolucja...*, p. 37.

⁷² See L. Villat, *La révolution et l'Empire (1789–1815)*, vol. I (*Les Assemblées révolutionnaires*), Paris 1947, pp. 3–6; A. Mathiez, *Rewolucja...*, pp. 37–38; J. Baszkiewicz, *Ludwik XVI*, pp. 209–210; E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, December 18 and 28, 1788, RA, Gallica vol. 471; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 93–94.

supported by young people from other Brittan cities. The nobility, beaten and driven out of the city, solemnly swore an oath not to send its representation to the Estates-General. All those events were well described in Staël's message dated January 29, 1789. The ambassador even stated that the great fire would spread from Brittany to the rest of France. Yet, it may be assumed that Staël did not attach great importance to the events in Brittany. He believed, as he expressed it in his next message, that the government would decisively solve local problems. He also believed that Necker would be able to break the resistance of the nobility and the clergy in other provinces. Therefore, in his message dated January 29 he concentrated mainly on electoral regulations and royal convocation letters that had been issued on January 24, 1789. Under that regulation the Estates-General were to gather in Versailles on April 27. In March there were to be gathered electoral assemblies in the bailiwicks. The electoral law was quite liberal. All members of the nobility were granted the right to participate personally in the meeting. Among the clergy electoral regulations favoured pastors over bishops, clergy and members of chapter houses. The electoral assemblies of the clergy and the nobility were to directly elect their representatives to the Estates-General. Complicated indirect elections were planned for the third estate. Yet, all men who were 25 years old or more and paid any tax could vote during the meetings of that estate. Special books of complaints were to be prepared during general election meetings in the bailiwicks and then presented to the Estates-General. Finally, Staël wrote about royal regulations of January 24 that: "It is really a great epoch in the history of France. Even those who have been closely following the progress of this revolution in the past three years could not foresee neither such a development of events nor such a quick transformation of all minds"⁷³.

In February an election campaign for the Estates-General coincided with a severe economic crisis. Manufacturers of fabrics lost competition with English goods and were forced to cut their production or even close whole manufactories. As a consequence, unemployment rose rapidly. Moreover, after a disastrous crop failure of 1788 a severe winter came and worsened the situation of the poorest. The price of bread rapidly increased which caused anxiety among both, urban residents and people living in rural areas. Riots, rebellions and mass looting were occurring in many places. The third estate's propaganda took place in an atmosphere of the great social unrest. All kinds of brochures, pamphlets, summons, statements and letters appeared at that time. The most active members of the third estate convened

⁷³ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, January 29 and February 1, 1789, RA, Gallica vol. 472; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 96–97. For more information on the above-mentioned problems see L. Villat, *op. cit.*, pp. 7–9; A. Mathiez, *Rewolucja...*, pp. 38–40, 43–44; J. Baszkiewicz, *Ludwik XVI*, p. 210; A. Soboul, *op. cit.*, pp. 66–68.

meetings, sowed propaganda and continued an active pre-election agitation. Royal representatives, in accordance with Necker's instructions, remained neutral during the election campaign. While the third estate was very active, the privileged were surprisingly passive and almost without any struggle gave field to their opponents. Books of complaints, edited during general election meetings, reflected a widespread desire for fundamental changes in the country. Royal absolutism was unanimously condemned. The clergy, the nobility and the third estate demanded to obey the constitution, limit powers of the king and his officials, appoint a permanent national representation that would decide on taxes and new laws, entrust local administration to elective estates provincial. They also demanded to transform tax system, carry out the reform of justice, guarantee personal freedoms and the freedom of the press. The privileged agreed on the equality of taxes but rejected the proposal of equal rights and equal access to all government offices. They fiercely defended the voting by estates as they considered it to be a guarantor of their privileges, old feudal rights and tithes. Interstate conflicts, recorded in books of complaints, were accompanied by contradictions within each estate. Pastors acted against bishops and religious orders. Provincial nobility opposed to the nobles of the court. Opinions of the third estate varied as well and depended on whether they were expressed by the bourgeoisie peasants, merchants or craftsmen. Deputies elected to the Estates-General were to present those various demands to the king⁷⁴. Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein did not describe all those problems in his messages. Firstly, he was not aware of many things. Secondly, he probably underestimated, like his father-in-law, Necker, the size of the French crisis of 1789. Yet, the Swedish ambassador had great intuition. On May 10 he wrote to Stockholm about the opening meeting of the Estates-General at Versailles. He noted that "last Tuesday [May 5, 1789 – author's note] was the greatest day in the history of France"⁷⁵. Staël was undoubtedly very close to the truth. He did not know, though, that he would witness many similar, or even more important, days in the history of the country that he considered his second home.

⁷⁴ See L. Villat, *op. cit.*, pp. 9–17; A. Mathiez, *Rewolucja...*, pp. 40–43, 45–47; A. Soboul, *op. cit.*, pp. 66–69; J. Baszkiewicz, *Ludwik XVI*, p. 210. For the overview of the situation in France in the years 1787–1789 see J. Godechot, *Les révolutions (1770–1799)*, Paris 1963, pp. 114–131; and *idem*, *France and...*, pp. 75–87. For a very detailed and comprehensive description of the issues concerning the internal situation in France during the revolt of the privileged see J. Egret, *La pré-révolution française (1787–1788)*, Paris 1962.

⁷⁵ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, May 10, 1789, RA, Gallica vol. 472; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 99–100. See also A. Söderhjelm, *op. cit.*, p. 196; N. Åkeson, *Gustaf III:s förhållande med franska revolutionen*, vol. I, Lund 1885, p. 17; A. Geffroy, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 87, 88 and fol. For more information on the beginning of the session of the Estates-General see A. Soboul, *op. cit.*, pp. 71–72; A. Mathiez, *Rewolucja...*, pp. 48–50; L. Villat, *op. cit.*, pp. 17–19; J. Baszkiewicz, *Ludwik XVI*, p. 213.

CHAPTER THREE

GROWING CONCERN: SWEDISH DIPLOMACY TOWARDS THE EVENTS IN FRANCE FROM MAY 1789 TO AUGUST 1790

FROM THE ESTATES-GENERAL TO THE FIRST REFORMS OF THE NATIONAL CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

The inauguration of the meeting of the Estates-General on May 5, 1789 caused consternation among the third estate deputies. In his three-hour boring speech filled with figures, Jacques Necker mentioned neither the issue of individual voting nor the question of political reforms. Disappointed in their hopes, deputies reacted to the minister's speech with dead silence. Later on that same day, they started a debate in order to take the common position on further actions of the government. The conflict between the estates began as early as on May 6 when representatives of the clergy and nobility gathered in their halls of the Palace of Versailles and began checking the proxies to form the separate Estate Assembly. In that situation, the deputies of the third estate, who did not want to agree on voting by estate, but at the same time were afraid to take an open action against that principle, contented themselves with putting forward a demand for a joint verification of mandates and refused to create a separate chamber. The next month was filled with fruitless negotiations between separate estate debates. On June 10 deputies of the third estate once again addressed the delegates of the first two estates, calling them to start a common debate and since it produced no result, on June 12, they proceeded to verify the mandates, reading the names of the representatives of all three estates selected in the individual constituencies one by one. Over the next few days, several parish priests joined the deputies of the third estate. In that situation, on June 17, 1789 the third estate deputies declared themselves the National Assembly and

granted themselves the right to approve all the taxes¹. Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein watched all the actions of the Estates-General deputies with great attention. However, from the very beginning he did not like the atmosphere of the meeting. As early as on May 17, 1789, he noted that the Estates-General were dominated by bad moods. The deputies cared more about their own interests than about the public good. They were more eager to counter the ideas of others than to strive towards a common constructive purpose. Well informed about the essence of the dispute between the estates, the Swedish diplomat emphasised that it consisted in the fact that the nobility and higher clergy wished to vote by estate, while the third estate wished to vote individually. At the beginning of June, Staël von Holstein wrote to Stockholm that the events in Versailles were far from taking the right turn. In his opinion, the blame for the inability to constitute the Estates-General fell on the nobility, who, fearing an attempt to limit their privileges, preferred to trigger the greatest possible confusion, only to postpone the moment of being forced to sacrifice anything. A very interesting account was sent by Staël to Stockholm on June 18, 1789. He wrote that a few days before the third estate had invited the nobility and clergy for joint verification of proxies. Since the two estates refused once again, the third estate deputies declared themselves the National Assembly. According to Staël, in that way the third estate went much further than it had been expected basing on the previous demands of the nation towards the king. The ambassador also anticipated that the third estate representatives would probably want to express consent to taxation and would aim to adopt a new constitution. However, in Staël's opinion, those conditions could be met only if the nobility retained the overall passivity and if the king did not decide to use force against the rebel deputies. The Swedish diplomat also thought that Louis XVI would not recognise deputies of the third estate as the representation of the entire nation, yet he would not force them to change the assumed name. Referring to the widely discussed reforming projects, Staël von Holstein remarked that a great ferment of minds should be expected if the king had to choose between a project prepared by representatives of the third estate and ideas put forward by the aristocrats who were hostile towards any changes. It seems worth emphasising that Staël von Holstein, regarded as a supporter of the oncoming revolution, watched the actions of the third estate representatives with some concern. Since writing about the intended unification of the forces of the nobility, the clergy and the parliaments, which together sought to defy the requests made by the third estate, he came to the conclusion that the latter

¹ See A. Mathiez, *La révolution française*, vol. I (*La chute de la royauté 1787–1792*), pp. 50–53; idem, *Rewolucja francuska*, Warszawa 1956, pp. 49–51; A. Soboul, *Rewolucja francuska*, Warszawa 1951, pp. 71–73; L. Villat, *La révolution et l'Empire (1789–1815)*, vol. I (*Les Assemblées révolutionnaires 1789–1799*), Paris 1947, pp. 18–22.

one was the most dangerous. However, from the point of view of the king's power, disputes between estates were not of a great significance. According to Staël, the essential demands of all three estates in political issues were in fact almost identical. The final conclusion of the ambassador was not too optimistic, though. He openly condemned both, previous actions of the Estates-General deputies and an increasing opposition of the court against the actions proposed by Jacques Necker. He expressed his opinion on deputies as follows: "Hypocritical doubt of the clergy, stubborn persistence of the nobility and anger of the third estate have given a pretty grim spectacle". The whole account was ended with the statement: "Never before had the nation been located between such an evil and such good. On the one hand, famine, bankruptcy, despotism and civil war; on the other, peace, freedom and power". Obviously the evil was represented in that case by Necker's enemies, "people without principles", unable to tolerate the fact that the man "who is only guided by a virtue and love of good" sits in the Royal Council².

Meanwhile, however, the situation was increasingly slipping out of the government's control. On June 19, after a heated debate, the clergy took a decision by a small majority of votes to join the third estate. It became clear that if the king did not prevent that fusion, the privileged would be defeated. On the same evening, the king decided to cancel all the resolutions adopted by the third estate deputies on a specially convened *lit de justice*. He also ordered, under the pretext of renovation, to close the meeting room of the estates. Thus, on June 20 deputies of the third estate gathered inside a tennis court, where they made an oath that they would not disband until a new constitution was established. Two days later, five prelates and 144 priests joined the third estate increasing the number of members of the National Assembly. The *lit de justice* of June 23, 1789, expected with great tension, led to a defeat of the king and the nobility. Louis XVI, invalidating all previous resolutions of the third estate, ordered the deputies to maintain division into three estates and debate in separate chambers. The king's order was, however, ignored by the representatives of the unprivileged. When the nobility and a part of the clergy left the meeting room, the third estate deputies remained in their seats. Later that same day, the National Assembly confirmed the previously adopted decisions and declared the inviolability of its members. Thus, the third estate stepped in the way of an open rebellion against the monarchy. The king chose not to use force and for the time

² See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, May 17, June 7 and 18, 1789, Riksarkivet in Stockholm [further on: RA], Gallica vol. 472, no page numbering (this remark applies to all files of Riksarkivet). See also *Correspondance diplomatique du baron de Staël-Holstein et de son successeur comme chargé d'affaires le baron Brinkman. Documents inédits sur la révolution (1783-1799) recueillis aux Archives Royales de Suède* [further on: *Corr. Staël-Holstein*], L. Leouzon Le Duc (ed.), Paris 1881, pp. 101-103.

being disobedient deputies remained masters of the situation³. All those events were reflected in the account by Staël von Holstein of June 25, 1789. He wrote that Necker was keenly seeking a compromise between the third estate and the privileged estates. According to him, on Friday the king had accepted the settlement agreement favourable to the third estate, presented to him by the minister. On Sunday, however, brothers of Louis XVI, Monsieur and the Count of Artois were appointed to the Royal Council and immediately introduced so many amendments to Necker's project that it became unacceptable for the National Assembly. On Monday, during the next meeting of the Council, the king once again changed his mind, rejecting (as Necker had predicted) a draft agreement with the third estate deputies. According to Staël, it was the Count of Artois who had advised Louis XVI to take steps that discredited royal authority, since the purpose of all those operations was to force Necker to resign. However, the ambassador informed the court of Stockholm that his father-in-law had no intention of leaving the ministry. He also wrote with deep satisfaction about such a huge popularity of Necker in Paris that when the minister did not turn up at a formal meeting of the Estates on June 23, it made such a great impression on the public that two thousand people came to the king with a request to keep Necker in the government. In the same message, Staël informed Gustav III that on the previous day the majority of the clergy had joined the National Assembly and in the morning of June 25, 47 representatives of the nobility, led by Louis Philippe, Duke of Orléans, had followed in their example. Although the vast majority of the nobility and a church hierarchy group were still in favour of separate meetings, the ambassador expected concessions from the king and his agreement with the National Assembly. Commenting on the matter of stopping a carriage of the Paris archbishop, opposing concessions to the third estate, at one of the streets, Staël wrote what follows: "It is sad that people interfere in these matters but if things have come to the point where they are now, it is the people who have become the sovereign"⁴.

Louis XVI and his aristocratic advisers were obviously not going to tolerate that state of affairs. On June 26 orders were issued to bring 20 thousand soldiers from foreign regiments near Versailles and Paris. The court was preparing to disperse the National Assembly by force. However, to allay suspicions of deputies, the following day the king addressed the nobility and clergy delegates devoted to him with a written summon to join the assembly. Court military preparations, however, led to the agitation in Paris. The

³ See A. Mathiez, *Rewolucja...*, pp. 51–54; A. Soboul, *op. cit.*, pp. 73–74.

⁴ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, June 25, 1789, RA, Gallica vol. 472; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 103–105. See also N. Åkeson, *Gustaf III:s förhållande till franska revolutionen*, vol. I, Lund 1885, p. 17; A. Geffroy, *Gustave III et la cour de France. Suivi d'une étude critique sur Marie-Antoinette et Louis XVI apocryphes*, vol. II, Paris 1867, p. 101.

situation in the city increasingly slipped out of the government's control. The king had also no control over the assembly, which on July 9, 1789 announced itself the National Constituent Assembly⁵. On the same day, Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein wrote in his telegram that he was concerned to watch a bizarre performance provided by the inconsistency and the indecisiveness of the King of France since his route was mapped by Necker on the one hand and a group of intriguers gathered around Marie Antoinette and the Count of Artois on the other. As a result, Louis XVI accepted some undertaking just to favour another solution after a while. He went forward without a plan of action, exposing himself to criticism from all sides. Necker had never ceased to explain to the king that there should be a consistent and unambiguous political system which would implement all possible measures that could avert the danger of the impending revolution. According to Staël, the minister had advised Louis XVI to unite with the nobility, the clergy and the parliaments since the former oppositionists became aware of the defeat and looked at what was happening in the Estates-General with growing concern. If the king adopted such a course of action, he should appoint a new minister, whose principles would be consistent with the above-mentioned objectives. The ambassador, however, found the second proposal made by his father-in-law to Louis XVI much closer to his heart since in the further part of the quoted message he wrote what follows: "But if the king was afraid of a terrible disaster which could be caused by such a behaviour, he should openly share the views of the people and, not being able to prevent the impending revolution, he should lead it just to control it". Unfortunately, however, "no great movement, either good or bad, lies in the very nature of the king. Looking carefully to both sides, he alternately takes completely contradictory pieces of advice in order to balance out ones with the others and to reconcile the two fighting parties". According to the Swedish diplomat, it was an inappropriate action that undermined the king's authority in the eyes of the nation. Commenting on the recent events, Staël wrote that it was certain that after the *lit de justice* of June 23 the court had a plan to arrest thirty deputies and disperse the rest. The orders were also issued to bring the military troops to Versailles; the command of the troops was given to the Marshal General of France, Victor François, Duke of Broglie⁶.

The ambassador did not have the slightest doubt that it was a project aimed against the estates. Fortunately, however, there were numerous organisational barriers that prevented putting that harmful idea into

⁵ For more information on the indicated problems see A. Mathiez, *Rewolucja...*, pp. 55–56; A. Soboul, *op. cit.*, pp. 74–77; J. Baszkiewicz, *Ludwik XVI*, Wrocław 1983, pp. 215–217; R. Bielecki, *Bastylia 1789*, Warszawa 1991, pp. 19–21; J. Godechot, *La prise de Bastille. 14 juillet 1789*, Paris 1965, p. 226 and fol.

⁶ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, July 9, 1789, RA, Gallica vol. 472.

practice. Contrary to the king, Staël von Holstein was aware of the moods in the French army, which, in his opinion, in a fit of bad temper, could dash the hopes pinned on it. In the further part of his message, Staël wrote that on the initiative of Honoré Gabriel, Count of Mirabeau, the National Assembly asked the king to send away the troops of the regular army and entrust the guard over Paris to the Bourgeois Guard. That action of the assembly was not approved of by the king, who recognised it as an encroachment on the prerogatives of the executive. According to the ambassador, the biggest problem of Louis XVI was, however, a split in the Royal Council, which made it impossible to make the right decisions. According to Staël, Jacques Necker, Armand Marc, Count of Montmorin, François Emmanuel, Count of Saint-Priest and César, Count of La Luzerne were the only people not only in the government, but also at court, who wanted to proceed without violence and in accordance with the principles dictated by reason and prudence. Expressing a great fear of foreign troops gathering at the vicinity of the capital, the ambassador, nevertheless, hoped that the heavens would protect France from making them fight "because an awful disaster that would result from using the troops against the assembly would not bring any good to the king. Minds are, in fact, so fired that nothing can stop the impending revolution. But if it breaks out, we should expect any possible excesses". At the end of his account, Staël finally allowed himself to express the opinion that "for the people, an open attack against the assembly may be an impulse, which would give them energy, the lack of which they are commonly accused of". The Swedish diplomat could not have even guessed how soon his expectations were to become true⁷.

On July 11, 1789, Louis XVI dismissed Jacques Necker, appointing a declared conservative, Louis Auguste Le Tonnelier, Baron of Breteuil, in his place. The next day, the news on the dismissal of the popular minister reached Paris, causing stunning impression. In protest, the stock exchange was closed and theatre performances were suspended. In various parts of the city spontaneous meetings and demonstrations were held. There was also a clash between the citizens and the Royal Allemand regiment commanded by Charles Eugène, Prince of Lambesc in the Tuileries Garden⁸. In the message written on July 12 to Stockholm, Staël von Holstein informed his court that the previous day at 3 p.m. the king had written to Necker, ordering him to resign from his office and leave France within 24 hours. Without any resistance, Necker scrupulously complied with the received order. Staël predicted that after his father-in-law's resignation other changes in the ministry should be expected. In his opinion, it was Marie Antoinette who had

⁷ See *ibidem*. The same message see *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 105–107.

⁸ See A. Mathiez, *Rewolucja...*, pp. 56–57; A. Soboul, *op. cit.*, pp. 77–78; L. Villat, *op. cit.*, pp. 31–32.

contributed to Necker's defeat. Accordingly, it should be expected that the foreign policy of France would henceforth be much more advantageous for the emperor and Russia. The ambassador was not sure if the queen's views were shared by Necker's successor, the Baron of Breteuil. Indeed, Staël did not think that the new government had much chance of success. As he wrote in the further part of the quoted message: "The new ministry, if it remains, will, however, be disgusting for the people. The ferment of minds has come to such an extent that one should fear the worst". The Swedish diplomat put the blame of that state of affairs on Louis XVI, about whom he wrote that "he is infinitely regrettable and it is extremely difficult to predict the scope of misfortunes that his weakness can bring to France"⁹.

On July 13 riots in Paris were still going on. Clusters of people were running along the streets in search of weapon. The Electoral Assembly, which had elected the Parisian deputies to the Estates-General, formed a Standing Committee in the town hall together with the old municipal authorities. The Committee, in turn, decided to create the bourgeois militia, the National Guard. The next day, July 14, 1789, the crowd marched to the Les Invalides Palace where they captured nearly 30 thousand shotguns whereas the residents of Saint-Antoine suburbs stormed the Bastille, a fortress being a symbol of a royal absolutism and tyranny; after a short resistance the Bastille surrendered. The people, intoxicated with the victory, murdered the commander of the Bastille, Bernard René, Marquis of Launay and the merchants' provost, Jacques de Flesselles, whose heads, tucked on the spade blades, were triumphantly displayed in the streets of the city. To everyone's surprise, the court remained extremely passive in face of those events. The commander of the royal troops standing at the Champs de Mars, Pierre Victor, Baron of Besenval, did not dare to enter Paris and ordered his soldiers to retreat. On July 15, encouraged by inactivity of the government, the Paris electors appointed Jean Sylvain Bailly for the position of a mayor of the capital and called on Marie Joseph, Marquis of La Fayette to take command of the National Guard. The direct, however, rather unexpected, consequence of those events was the capitulation of Louis XVI, who on the same day appeared in the National Assembly to inform the deputies about the withdrawal of the army. On July 16 the king removed Breteuil from the government and called Necker back. The next day, Louis XVI personally came to the Paris city hall to legitimise the outcomes of a popular revolution with his presence. Accepting a symbol of revolution from the hands of Mayor Bailly, a tricoloured ribbon, was the measure of his humiliation. Outraged

⁹ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, July 12, 1789, RA, Gallica vol. 472; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 107–108; A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige och den franska revolutionen. Bidrag till kännedom om Sveriges och Frankrikes inbördes förhållande i slutet av 1700-talet*, vol. I (*Gustav III:s tid*), Stockholm 1920, pp. 197–198.

by the king's submissive attitude, uncompromising aristocrats led by the Count of Artois and the Prince of Condé decided to leave France, thus initiating the exile movement¹⁰. Interestingly, none of those events were reflected in Staël von Holstein's accounts. He did not refer to July events until a few months later. For the time being, in the postscript to the message of July 19, the ambassador informed Gustav III only about the departure of the Count of Artois to Holland and a restoration of Necker to the position of the Controller-General of Finance¹¹.

Meanwhile, the situation in France was continuously exacerbating. The example of Paris was followed by provincial towns. Almost everywhere new municipal councils were appointed and bourgeois militias were created. Royal commissarial officers started collaborating with local authorities or left their positions. The central government lost its influence on the course of events. What was still worse, on July 20 great peasant riots (called the "Great Fear") were launched in Ile-de-France; spreading at an enormous speed, they soon reached the furthest corners of France. The capital was not spared, either. On July 23 state councillor, Joseph François Foullon and his son-in-law, the intendant of Paris, Louis Bénigne François Bertier, were hanged on a lamp-post at the city hall¹². Watching tensely all those events, on August 2, 1789 Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein wrote that the chaos which was ruling Paris and the whole France was not about to stop. He emphasised the fact that the executive had been almost permanently taken out of the hands of the king, which sadly resulted in a total anarchy both, in the capital and in the provinces. Writing about the actions undertaken by Necker who, aiming to calm the situation in the capital, tried to lead to the declaration of a general amnesty and release the Baron of Besenval, arrested by the municipal authorities, the ambassador was convinced that they would fail. He wrote to Gustav III "that both, the people and the National Assembly intend to harshly treat all those who are considered by the public to be perpetrators of their misery"¹³. Unable to make a decision whether to use the royal troops against rebellious peasants, the National Assembly decided to quell the riots in a different way. During the famous meeting on the night of August 4/5, 1789, in the atmosphere

¹⁰ For more information on the indicated events see A. Mathiez, *Rewolucja...*, pp. 57–59; A. Soboul, *op. cit.*, pp. 78–79; R. Bielecki, *op. cit.*, pp. 22–102; J. Godechot, *op. cit.*, pp. 227–323; L. Villat, *op. cit.*, pp. 34–39.

¹¹ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, July 19, 1789, apostille, RA, Gallica vol. 472.

¹² See A. Mathiez, *Rewolucja...*, pp. 60–63; A. Soboul, *op. cit.*, pp. 79–82; L. Villat, *op. cit.*, pp. 39–42. For more information on the events at French provinces see G. Lefebvre, *La grande peur de 1789*, Paris 1932; idem, *The Great Fear of 1789: Rural panic in revolutionary France*, G. Rudé (ed.), New York 1989.

¹³ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, August 2, 1789, RA, Gallica vol. 472; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, p. 108.

of a general elation, the deputies of the privileged provinces, the delegates of particular cities, the nobility and priests, one by one renounced their former privileges "on the altar of the nation". Overnight, the principle of equality before the law was established leading also to a political and administrative unification of the entire state. In that way, the task which the absolute monarchy had been preoccupied with for so long was fulfilled. Now, the new building could be erected on the ruins of the old order. Meanwhile, the news of the night resolutions of the assembly spread with alarming rapidity around the country resulting in an instant pacification. Peasants stopped setting fire to castles, literally interpreting the first sentence of the edict, which stated that "the National Assembly abolishes the feudal system entirely". Yet, on the grounds of the executor regulations of the edict issued between August 5 and 11, 1789, only obligations of peasants were abolished. Burdens imposed on peasant's land (rents, tenures, tributes) were to be still kept until the land was fully bought out. Also, the tithe was to be levied on the peasants until the church reform was carried out¹⁴.

Commenting on all those events, in a message of August 9, Staël von Holstein noted that on the night of August 4/5 the Estates-General (the ambassador continuously used that name) took a giant step towards equality, which the third estate had seemed to miss for so long. Yet, the Swedish diplomat anxiously watched the course of the events on the French political scene. He believed that France had entered a revolution that could not be compared with any other. To his mind, the French Revolution was exceptional due to the rapid development and a great importance of changes to which it led. Already then, Staël formulated apparently a very apt assumption that the revolution would soon lead to blood feuds between the fighting factions. He openly admitted that he was alone in his views as all other observers of the French political scene thought that things would soon calm down and return to the natural order. Ambassador's fears were aroused, however, by three main issues. Firstly, the departure from the country of the princes of the blood and of many other important personalities who did not intend to come to terms with the new orders. Secondly, enormous discontent of many aristocrats with the changes that had recently occurred. Thirdly, the insubordination of the people and their crazy demands, so absurd that impossible to satisfy. Staël was also deeply convinced (absolutely rightly!) that the king and the queen believed that sacrifices which they had recently been forced to make were only temporary and enforced by the necessity of the moment. Thus, he concluded that in the future the royal couple would strive to the

¹⁴ See A. Mathiez, *Rewolucja...*, pp. 63–66, 67–70; A. Soboul, *op. cit.*, pp. 82–85; L. Villat, *op. cit.*, pp. 44–46.

restitution of a strong royal power. All those observations made him think that the universal reconciliation should not be soon expected in France¹⁵.

On August 13, 1789, Staël von Holstein wrote about further works of the National Assembly, which was dealing with the privileges of the clerical estate. According to the ambassador, the clergy was forced to far-reaching concessions against their will, and their sacrifice was caused largely by fears of Parisian street's reaction. In the same message, Staël drew attention also to the absence of any executive power in France and a strong opposition against the government from the part of the National Assembly. In his opinion, the Count of Mirabeau, Father Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès and their quite numerous supporters would rather reduce the king's power as much as possible. The public was certain that the activities of the party were secretly directed by Louis Philippe, Duke of Orléans but the ambassador did not think that he was capable of doing so. The biggest concern of the Swedish diplomat was, however, aroused by the fact that the assembly had introduced as many amendments to the new financial draft presented to it by Necker "as it would mean a fatal blow to the loan"¹⁶.

On August 26, 1789 the National Assembly passed the famous "Declaration of Human and Citizen Rights" considered devised as a prelude to a future constitution¹⁷. Interestingly, the issue did not arouse much interest of Staël von Holstein. In his telegram of August 29 he informed Gustav III only about the fact that he could not give the king's friend, Madame de Boufflers, correspondence addressed to her because at the very beginning of the revolution she had left Paris. He also wrote that affairs in France had taken a most serious and most disastrous course. After major disasters which had rolled over the country in recent times, certain calming could have been expected. However, it could not happen because, according to Staël, there was a group of people who aimed at deepening current difficulties. The public was convinced that the Duke of Orléans was leading that terrible party.

¹⁵ E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, August 9, 1789, RA, Gallica vol. 472; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 108–110.

¹⁶ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, August 13, 1789, RA, Gallica vol. 472; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 110–111. French financial situation was truly disastrous at that time. In his speech in the National Assembly on August 7, 1789, Necker suggested raising taxes and announcing a new 30-million-*livre* loan with the interest rate of 5%. The assembly expressed their consent only to the loan, lowering its interest rate to 4%. After 20 days, it turned out that only bonds worth 2,5 million *livres* had been sold. On August 27 Necker suggested announcing a 80-million-*livre* loan. This time, though, no buyers were eager to purchase government securities. Minister's vote of confidence was then exhausted and his popularity in the society greatly decreased. See L. Villat, *op. cit.*, p. 50. For more information on Necker's activities at that time see J. Egret, *Necker, ministre de Louis XVI, 1776–1790*, Paris 1978.

¹⁷ See A. Soboul, *op. cit.*, pp. 85, 98–99; A. Mathiez, *Rewolucja...*, pp. 72–74; L. Villat, *op. cit.*, pp. 46–49.

The ambassador himself seemed to concur with those views simultaneously paying attention to the fact that the collapse of discipline in the army, government's trouble with getting new loans and ensuring sufficient quantity of grain to supply the capital escalated prevailing anarchy and created an opportunity for the ill-minded to plan the next coups.

Staël noted also rumours that England was doing everything to aggravate difficulties of the French. Therefore, it seemed likely to him that the Duke of Orléans was acting with the approval of the London court encouraging the former minister, Charles Alexandre de Calonne, to engage in cooperation. Staël von Holstein finished his argument with the following statement: "We are extremely fortunate, Your Majesty, that our former political relationship with France has been broken since that country (if it ever comes out of a terrible crisis which it is facing today) must be considered as removed for many years from a group of the European powers". On September 29, 1789, the ambassador's telegram reached Gustav III staying at that time in the Finnish town of Loviisa. Later the same day, the king made a note on it for Gustaf Franc: "We must tell Staël to prepare for us a detailed list of all the leaders of different parties, with information on their projects and their talents. We also want to know as much as possible about the current situation of the king, his wife, brothers as well as old and new ministers¹⁸". In the summer of 1789, Gustav III, who for a long time had tensely watched the developments in France, seemed to welcome the news coming from a country ruled by the monarch who he had regarded for many years as his closest ally with a growing concern.

GUSTAV III IN THE FACE OF THE JULY EVENTS IN FRANCE

The Swedish ruler disapprovingly watched the behaviour of Louis XVI and his ministers both, in domestic and foreign policy for a long time. He was outraged by the fact that the court of Versailles had not provided him with help in the war against Russia. He got his frustration off his chest when he received information that the French Ambassador to Stockholm, Louis Marc, Marquis of Pons, had been ordered to return to Paris by the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Irritated by such a turn of events, Gustav III in his letter to Ulric Gustaf Franc on July 15, 1789 voiced harsh criticism against the policy of France in recent years: "I do not know if the best way to regain its former position is to break off all the previous alliances that the Versailles court had

¹⁸ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, August 29, 1789 and a note of Gustav III on the message, RA, Gallica vol. 472; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 111–113. See also A. Söderhjelm, *op. cit.*, p. 200; Z. Anusik, *Wydarzenia we Francji w pierwszych miesiącach rewolucji (maj-październik 1789 r.) w świetle doniesień ambasadora Szwecji w Paryżu (Wersalu) Erika Magnusa Staëla von Holsteina*, "Przegląd Nauk Historycznych" 2016, vol. XV, No. 1, pp. 123–125.

built up in the North. Closing its embassy in Stockholm, France breaks former ties that have always existed between our kingdoms. After all this, it should also break the House of Bourbons' *pacte de famille* [with Spain – author's note] and then, completely alone, it can plunge into the internal anarchy. All this together will properly commemorate the glorious reign of Louis XVI and will go hand in hand with admirably powerful support that France gave Holland two years ago. It breaks my heart when I see such a beautiful kingdom being so cruelly experienced in the field of politics and finance"¹⁹.

At the beginning of August, the king received the first news of the events in Paris of July 14 and 15. Gustav III heard the news with a real horror and reacted to it with great sadness. In the letter to Curt von Stedingk, who for the past several years served in the French regiment Royal Suédois, written on August 7, 1789, the king fiercely condemned both, King Louis XVI's capitulation to the National Constituent Assembly and his decision to withdraw the troops from Paris. He was outraged by the attitude of the ruler, who, when "the estates announced that the king's ministers and civil and military officers were responsible for their actions to the people, accompanied by Monsieur and the Count of Artois, walking on foot, without retinue, arrived at headquarters of the Estates-General showing almost public repentance and asking for help in quelling the riot. Here is what happened and this is how weakness, uncertainty and unwisely used violence will lead to overthrow of Louis XVI"²⁰. On the following day, August 8, Gustav III wrote to his trusted adviser and friend, Gustaf Mauritz Armfelt: "This poor France! This poor France! What a pity! I am in despair"²¹. On the same day, in a letter to Ulric Gustaf Franc, the king expressed the following opinion on the latest events: "The news from France makes me so overcome with emotion as if it concerned me personally. I feel anxiety mixed with the deepest sorrow taking into account the actions and the situation of the poor king, the best man in the world and yet the most unsuitable to rule such a big country, especially such country as France. As a human being, I am deeply moved by the horrors committed by those crazy Parisians and, as a king, I am upset about the vile behaviour that the French have displayed against the authority of the king, forming an army independent of the ruler and establishing themselves

¹⁹ See Gustav III to U.G. Franc, Liikala camp, July 15, 1789, *Kon. Gustaf III:s bref till Riks-Drotsen Grefve Axel Wachtmeister och Stats-Sekreteraren Ulric Gustaf Franc, efter handskriffter på Trolle-Ljungby* [further on: *Bref till Wachtmeister och Franc*], G. Andersson (ed.), Örebro 1860, p. 102.

²⁰ See Gustav III to C. v. Stedingk, Kymmenegård, August 7, 1789 as cited in A. Söderhjelm, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

²¹ See Gustav III to G.M. Armfelt, Kymmenegård, August 8, 1789, *Konung Gustaf III:s bref till friherre G.M. Armfelt* [further on: *Bref till Armfelt*], E. Tegnér (ed.), in: *Historiska Handlingar*, vol. XII, Stockholm 1883, p. 95. See also A. Söderhjelm, *op. cit.*, p. 145; N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

a governor (this is what I call the new merchants' provost) [the king meant the Mayor of Paris, Jean Sylvain Bailly – author's note], which must have been offensive to the monarch. I can also hear the rumours that the Paris general [commander of the National Guard, Marquis of La Fayette – author's note] is the nephew of my good friend, Madame de Boufflers, which additionally breaks my heart. I am sending her a letter via Staël von Holstein. I am infinitely content with his behaviour and since the king is nothing and Mr Necker is everything he should be very useful to us". Interestingly, outraged by the behaviour of Louis XVI's subjects, Gustav III himself intended to make use of the trouble of his former ally. Later in the same letter, he wrote that he had heard rumours that France was going to dismiss all the German troops which at the period of a general chaos and laxity had remained loyal to the king. Therefore, Gustav III informed the Secretary of State that he wanted to admit those troops to serve in the Swedish army. He did not expect any special problems about it as, in his opinion, "Necker himself and other leaders of the people who are turned against Austria should be interested in getting rid of those troops as soon as possible". However, if the French showed any resistance towards the implementation of that project it was always possible to rely on a military alliance of 1784, under which the court of Versailles should send 12 thousand soldiers to support Sweden. According to the king, it should be a convenient and sufficient pretext for the French ministry to clear the country of the dangerous troops uncomfortable for him at that moment²².

On August 10, 1789, Gustav III received the news about the visit of the King of France made in Paris on July 17. Therefore, he wrote again to Gustaf Mauritz Armfelt: "The revolution in France is one of the most amazing events in history; and the recent step of the king, who has personally come to the Paris City Hall, thus confirming and sanctioning all the iniquities committed by the people, is such a strange matter that it could be compared only to the case of Henry III of the times when that unfortunate king signed, because of false political calculations, a confederation of the Catholic League. Nothingness of the present king may rescue him from such dreadful consequences as that step brought to Henry III. Nevertheless, his deed is destructive to the kingdom. Soon there will be the government similar to the one that we had in Sweden in 1720, which they will establish, perhaps not realising that". In the further part of the letter, the king ordered Armfelt to find out what the opinion of Madrid court on the recent events in France was. He also asked him to gather all the information on events taking place in Paris as well as on the fate of the queen, "the Count of Artois, who, as they say, has been

²² See Gustav III to U.G. Franc, Kymmenegård, August 8, 1789, *Bref till Wachtmeister och Franc*, pp. 114–115.

rescued in Holland” and on the actions of all those who had any influence on Louis XVI and who could lead to changes of his recent decisions. Gustav III once again confirmed his negative opinion on the King of France by saying that “he is a really poor king, in the very sense of this word”²³. In a letter written on the same day to Ulric Gustaf Franc, the ruler of Sweden returned again to the issue of renting the German troops in the service of France. “Since the kingdom has disintegrated I am pretty sure that my idea might be implemented. The only obstacle may be the lack of money. I have prepared a telegram to Staël, which I will send to you open to be copied in the office. In the message, I explain the details of my plan to the ambassador”. Next, the king wrote as follows: “Meanwhile, it is interesting for me what the King of Spain thinks about the issue of overturning the monarch’s power in France and whether it will cause any changes in Spanish foreign policy since I know that the Madrid court disagreed with Versailles on the Austrian system and only the fear of breaking the Family Compact prevented the Spaniards from accepting a completely different system of alliances. It is very possible that the current French ministry (even if only driven by aversion to the queen) wishes to act against the interests of the imperial courts. This can all lead to the establishment of an entirely new social order with unforeseeable consequences. Therefore, I would like you to pass my remarks to the ministers in Madrid, Paris, London and Berlin. I also want you to order the minister in Vienna to inform us about even the smallest details of what is said about the events in France by the emperor, Kaunitz and all other significant personalities of the court of Vienna. Knowing all these details, we will be able to form to smaller or larger degree an opinion on the issue of how big attention is attached to these important events”²⁴. In the argumentation cited above two points deserve special emphasis. Firstly, the king’s conviction about the anti-Austrian attitude of Necker and the people whom he considered to be the leaders of the French Revolution. Secondly, the opinion that the events in France will lead to the inevitable turning point in the international arena.

²³ See Gustav III to G.M. Armfelt, Kymmenegård, August 10, 1789, *Bref till Armfelt*, p. 96. See also A. Söderhjelm, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

²⁴ See Gustav III to U.G. Franc, Kymmenegård, August 10, 1789, *Bref till Wachtmeister och Franc*, p. 118. Spanish reaction to the July events in France was described by the Swedish envoy to Madrid, Carl August Ehrensvärd in his message of August 3. From his message, it appeared that the Spanish court tried to cut the Spanish society off from all the news coming from France since Spain was afraid that the French example could remind the Spanish nation of the existence of the Corteses which the Spaniards were very attached to in the past. See C.A. Ehrensvärd to Gustav III, Madrid, August 3, 1789, apostille, RA, Hispanica vol. 31.

In both cases, the king's predictions proved to be correct but he had to wait for their fulfilment for a long time.

On August 13, 1789 Gustav III similarly wrote to Armfelt: "I am looking forward to the post in order to know the news from France. This amazing revolution will certainly plunge the whole Europe into a new chaos". It does not seem, however, that the king was particularly bothered with contemporary problems of Louis XVI since in the same letter to his favourite he confided his plans to attract French actors who, in his opinion, were to lose their jobs in the anarchic country very soon. At the same time, Gustav III came up with the idea of inviting French emigrants to Stockholm. The quoted letter to Armfelt includes the following statement: "I have felt a temptation to offer asylum to the Count of Artois. It seems to me that it is my duty to be interested in the disaster of Louis XV's grandson and giving shelter for the son of France seems something very honourable to me"²⁵.

A few days later Gustav III received the news about the murder of the capital commissarial officer committed by the Parisians. He was shocked by the news since on August 19, 1789 he wrote to Gustaf Mauritz Armfelt: "The news from France has horrified me so much that I could not sleep that night and fell asleep only at about 4 a.m. Meanwhile, on the nights preceding February 17, 1789 and August 19, 1772 I slept very well. I am still afraid that I would see the head of Mr Foullon which is served to his son-in-law, Mr Bertier, to kiss by these scoundrels. And this is supposed to be this amazing Paris, where all the nations of Europe have met in order to seek pleasure and to find solace in their worries! This is supposed to be a place where we would like to retreat if we were driven out of here. Indeed, it would be like falling from Scylla to Charybdis! What horrible people! These are orang-utans (cannibals) of Europe. Why is such grace and kindness combined with such amazingly outright cruelty?"²⁶. Asking Armfelt such a painful question, Gustav III could not have even guessed how despaired he would be about the next news coming from the French capital.

²⁵ See Gustav III to G.M. Armfelt, Kymmenegård, August 13, 1789, *Bref till Armfelt*, p. 99. See also A. Söderhjelm, *op. cit.*, p. 146.

²⁶ See Gustav III to G.M. Armfelt, Kymmenegård, August 19, 1789, *Bref till Armfelt*, p. 103. See also A. Söderhjelm, *op. cit.*, p. 146; N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, p. 11. For the reaction of Gustav III to the news coming from France see also E. Schröderheim, *Skrifter till konung Gustaf III:s historia*, E. Tegnér (ed.), 2nd ed., Stockholm 1892, p. 105; G.J. Adlerbeth, *Historiska anteckningar. Efter en i von Brinkmanska Arkivet på Trolle-Ljungby befintlig handskrift*, G. Andersson (ed.), part 1, Örebro 1856, p. 75; *Ögonvitten om Gustav III*, B. Hennings (ed.), Stockholm 1960, p. 378.

A NEW RESHUFFLE ON THE FRENCH POLITICAL SCENE:
THE SECOND DISTURBANCE OF PARIS PEOPLE: THE FIRST
ATTEMPT TO EXPLAIN MECHANISMS OF A REVOLUTION

On the last days of August 1789 Staël von Holstein's reports were still pervaded with far-reaching pessimism since he wrote that the Estates-General wanted to limit the king's power almost to zero and the country was still in the state of agitation. Staël put the blame of the whole confusion on Louis XVI who at the beginning of the revolution had taken a number of wrong decisions. However, the ambassador hoped that Necker's common sense and wisdom could moderate exalted ideas of the assembly since the minister did everything that he could to retain as much power in king's hands as a monarch should have. In the same message, Staël wrote that the Swiss would probably give up service in France. He also assured his monarch that he would try to enlist some of their regiments in the Swedish service. What, however, seems most unbelievable, in the same letter, the ambassador asked Gustav III for permission to leave Paris for a period of 2–3 months in order to undergo treatment in Switzerland. He promised to return to his post as soon as something significant happens in France²⁷. Nevertheless, for the time being, Staël remained in Paris and continued his correspondence with the Stockholm court. On September 3 he wrote in his next message that he had received the king's order via Ulric Gustaf Franc to depict a picture of a current relation between Spain and France and to describe the situation in the latter country. He found the latter task extremely difficult due to the complex situation which France had recently been in. He could do nothing but to resort to conjecture which, in his opinion, was the only way to try to describe the future of the French state. Staël wrote that if the constitution remained in a form the healthiest part of the nation wished for, so, in other words, strong executive power was kept in the king's hands and the king was granted the absolute *veto* in relation to all new laws, an alliance with Spain would remain intact. If, however, various cabala and ridiculous claims of the Estates-General removed the king from everything, it seemed that the Spanish court, if asked to do so by the court of Versailles, would like to support the French monarchy and protect it from the dangers of a currently raging storm. Yet, it was hard to predict what the actual consequences of the current disorder would be. It was necessary to wait for the adoption of the constitution to be able to infer how big influence the French people would

²⁷ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, August 30, 1789, RA, Gallica vol. 472. On October 13, 1789 Gustav III made a note on the message to U.G. Franc. According to the king's order, Staël was to continue negotiations on hiring Swiss regiments. The monarch also agreed for his departure to Switzerland on the condition that he would return to Paris the following January. See *ibidem*. See also *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, p. 113.

have on political commitments that the king would like to give to his allies. According to the ambassador, the issue would certainly lead to a future conflict between the nation and the court. With a great deal of insight, he predicted that the court would be forced to renounce all connections with the Austrian House. Old reluctance of the French towards the Austrians had in fact been recently enhanced by simply unimaginable hatred of the people for the queen, widely regarded as the cause of all evil that had struck France. In the same message, Staël informed the king that the Count of Artois' debt, amounting to 19 million *livres*, had been revealed. It had not been expected that the sum would be so enormous, especially after Calonne had paid off all count's creditors shortly before his resignation from the ministry. Three days later, Staël wrote that the National Assembly had discussed the matter of the royal *veto* but without any hope of making a constructive decision. In the same message, he also expressed the opinion that Marie Antoinette had recently lost a great influence on state affairs and the prophecy that the misfortune of the ruler would never end seemed close to be fulfilled²⁸.

In the account written on September 13, 1789, Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein attempted to explain what had recently happened in France. The text seems so interesting that I take the liberty of quoting it in a wider summary. Expressing at the beginning the opinion that the revolution in France was an event worth placing forever in the annals of the world, Staël wrote further that in order to explain the reasons of those extraordinary events one would have to go back to the days of the ministry of the Archbishop of Sens as one could find there the signs of a revolution which was already to be expected. A disastrous state of finances, which the minister found, forced him to take much effort to fill the privy purse. All actions taken by him, however, were ill-conceived and badly implemented. They also resulted in pitiful consequences, leading ultimately to the humiliation of the king's authority. They wanted to please the people at all costs but it led to nothing other than abandoning works on real reforms. Promises which were not to be fulfilled should be never made... Soon, the good will of the minister became suspicious, his weakness and awkwardness were revealed, which was instantly followed by common disrespect. In that case, all the actions of the archbishop must have proved fruitless. A ray of hope appeared when Necker entered the ministry. Although the king and the queen were forced to appoint him again, self-interest would obviously encourage them to entrust themselves unreservedly to a man who had been appointed to the ministry only because of a great danger which the state had faced. The lack of full confidence of the royal couple turned out to be a major misfortunes of Necker's

²⁸ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, September 3 and 6, 1789, RA, Gallica vol. 472; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 113–115.

new administration. In the end, circumstances forced him to convene the Estates-General. From the beginning, the king, the queen and the Count of Artois were against doubling the representation of the third estate. Yet, that was the way in which the privileged were forced to pay taxes. Doubling the representation of the third estate also strengthened the king's party providing the ruler with defenders being the most numerous part of the nation. The parliaments, court intriguers and the privileged became the cause of the first unrest. Necker wanted to strengthen the state and king's authority. The Count of Artois recognised, however, that he should defend all the privileges of the nobility with no exception. The queen secretly supported Necker's opponents. She acted in that manner against her own actual interests²⁹.

The Estates-General were opened under bad auspices. Aggressive mood prevailed among the nobility and the manorial party. Most cities were faithful to the king and sought his protection. The behaviour of the king, aristocrats and Necker's enemies, however, alienated the townspeople from the court. The resistance of the nobility to joint verification of proxies forced the third estate to declare themselves the National Assembly. The court showed indecisiveness and made next mistakes. Efforts were made to make Necker leave the government. Meanwhile, the assembly was greatly divided since the interests of all three estates were, in fact, very divergent. Therefore, the king's intervention proved to be necessary. *Lit de justice*, during which Necker's wise declaration was read did not bring about the expected results. The Count of Artois torpedoed the minister's ideas and decided to introduce fundamental changes to the text of the declaration prepared by him which was very favourable to the third estate. Necker, Saint-Priest and Montmorin told the king about the danger which he faced introducing changes to the original text of the Controller-General of Finance.

In the evening, however, the Council adopted a draft of the Count of Artois. *Lit de justice*, which was held on June 23, revealed all the absurdity of conduct to which the king was induced as he lost all the confidence and popularity which he had enjoyed so far among the representatives of the third estate. After returning to the palace, Necker, who had been absent from the meeting, was given a dismissal. Obedient to the received orders, Necker immediately left for Paris. The next morning, 100 deputies and a large number of people gathered in front of the palace of the Controller-General, demanding Necker's return to the government. Among the enthusiastic people, Necker was restored to his previous position. There was still little hope of overcoming the crisis but, unfortunately, it completely failed. Intriguers and enemies of the minister began a real smear campaign against him. His clean and right character only increased the number of his enemies. The king

²⁹ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, September 13, 1789, RA, Gallica vol. 472.

with the help of the Marshal of Broglie was preparing for an armed solution of the pressing problems. Meanwhile, however, the opposition grew on all sides and agitation increased across the country. It was impossible to count on the loyalty of the French guards. Necker suggested that the king should promise Parisians forming the Bourgeois Guard under the condition that the monarch could appoint all the officers. He also suggested sending away the army of the Marshal of Broglie, whose presence caused resentment of the public opinion. Through his further decision, the king only increased discontent of the third estate. When Necker finally saw that no piece of his advice, thousands of which he was daily giving to the king, was implemented, he felt obliged to present the monarch with the opinion that his conscience did not allow him to remain silent against the dangers which the state would be exposed to if his plan was not implemented. And if he was not able to implement his ideas, he would have to ask the king for permission to resign. Necker wanted to remain in the government but only on the condition that the steps which he intended to take were not changed by anyone³⁰.

Faced with such alternatives, the king could not choose between his wife and brother and the minister. Necker eventually decided not to require the dismissal so as not to cause further agitation of a public opinion. Meanwhile, his position at court was becoming increasingly difficult. The number of open and secret enemies of the minister was increasing. Among them in the first place there were aunts of the king, Louis Joseph, Prince of Condé, Louis François, Prince of Conti, the Baron of Breteuil, Paul François, Duke of La Vauguyon, the whole Polignac family, Anne Charles, Duke of Montmorency-Luxembourg, Jean Thérèse, Marquis of Autichamp, adherents of executing plans of the Marshal of Broglie as well as all the ladies-in-waiting hating Necker for a long time and working on his dismissal. Marc Marie, Marquis of Bombelles, the Ambassador of France to Venice, Breteuil's friend, was used as a mediator in reaching a settlement between the baron and the Duchess of Polignac. La Vauguyon was intriguing, the Prince of Condé was looking for fame. Conti could see the benefits of keeping Necker in power but he was too dependent on the parliaments, being honoured as their leader. The aunts of the king wanted to introduce Joseph François Foullon to the government. The former minister, Charles de Calonne, supported by the Polignacs and his friend, Joseph Hyacinthe Vaudreuil, spread his doctrine among aristocrats. The Baron of Breteuil, who had entered the ministry with honours thanks to gambling, believed that he would never need anything more to increase his power because he had always been lucky so far. That is what the most important man of the new administration looked like. He was also entrusted with the task to acquire necessary funds since the lack of money was the biggest

³⁰ See *ibidem*.

obstacle to the implementation of plans developed by the enemies of the former minister. Since Breteuil had no idea about the finance, he decided to seek the assistance of Jean Pierre Louis, Baron of Batz, an adventurer, who had made a fortune during the administration of the Archbishop of Sens. Batz promised Breteuil 100 million *livres*, yet he wanted to issue interest-bearing government securities for that sum, seeing no other way of getting the money. Marshal Victor François de Broglie, who was commanding the army, promised to quell everything. In accordance with the originally agreed plan, a huge military camp, where the king was going to move after leaving Versailles, was going to be set up. From there, the monarch was to order the Estates-General to abide by his will and in case of the slightest opposition he was to order dissolution of the National Assembly and to arrest those of its members who would put up the greatest resistance. Necker was also to be arrested and there was even a plan to pursue legal actions against him in the Paris Parliament. In order to make Parisians obedient, the army with the strong artillery was going to be brought into the city. Ministers were ordered to spread leaflets saying that it was Necker who was responsible for the rise of the bread price because he had imposed new taxes on people and his policies had led to enlarging the wasteland area. The conspirators, impatiently waiting for the right moment to force the king to dismiss Necker, did not take into account the enormous discontent in the army. A military camp could not be formed because every day soldiers were leaving their banners. The great plan was, therefore, limited to the most important point which was dismissing Necker. The king was persuaded to write to Necker with a demand for his resignation. Marquis La Luzerne delivered the letter to the minister at 3 o'clock. Three hours later, Necker left Versailles. Two guards followed the route of his journey. It is not clear what orders they had and what their intentions were. At the end of the quoted message, Staël von Holstein fully confirmed a contemporarily common belief about the conservative nature of his father-in-law's views. In his opinion, the whole Necker's plan was based on the fact that he wanted first of all to lead to a financial recovery. If he succeeded, he then wanted to restore the disturbed order in the country maintaining its integrity in all aspects and preserving the king's authority and his powers unchanged. All the plans proved to be too much for Necker, who, according to Staël, had to fight against malice, weakness, exceptional grudges, intolerable intrigues and depleted finances while attempting to prevent the total ruin of the kingdom where all the authorities were paralysed and where there was no power or military discipline. In such a deplorable state of affairs it proved to be impossible to delay or stop the march of the impetuously imminent revolution³¹.

³¹ See *ibidem*. The same message see *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 115–125 (Here the incorrect date: September 15 instead of 13, 1789). See also A. Söderhjelm, *op. cit.*, p. 213.

In his next account, Staël von Holstein very critically referred to what had happened in the National Assembly. Raised in a country with a long parliamentary tradition he could not understand the fact that the French were still learning the basic principles of politics. In the message of September 17 he wrote to Gustav III that the observation of the assembly's actions confirmed the opinion that the French could not be qualified as the truly free nation since they unnecessarily lost time instead of restoring order in the country and giving the king the chance to rule the state. Currently, they were dealing with succession to the throne, wondering whether, in case of extinction of the main line of the Bourbons, the Spanish line should not be excluded from succession and whether the right to the crown should not be given to the family of Orléans. The ambassador considered debates on that subject to be distasteful and dangerous. In his opinion, the two factions were fighting for supremacy in the assembly. One of them was the party headed by Louis Philippe, Duke of Orléans. According to Staël, who had never liked the first prince of the blood and concurred with the opinion that it was England that was financing the activities of the party, it had always put forward extreme and rebellious ideas. The aristocratic faction was still worse as its clear aim was to discredit the assembly in the eyes of the public. The ambassador also seemed quite seriously concerned about the shortage of bread in Paris. Therefore, he drew the conclusion that there could be other riots in the capital. He also noted a rumour that the Kings of Prussia, Sardinia and Spain had offered the King of France military aid to quell rebellious moods. However, he openly admitted that the news would require further confirmation. On September 24 Staël could, with some satisfaction, inform Gustav III that the assembly had finally recognised the need to strengthen the executive, agreeing to grant the king a suspending *veto* for the period of two legislative assemblies. In the same message, he wrote to the king that Necker, in the assembly, reported on the situation of state finances. On that occasion, he expressed his belief that if Necker's plan was approved, France might overcome the crisis which it had been currently suffering from. Three days later, Staël sent a message to Stockholm saying that the assembly had adopted Necker's plan and ordered its implementation. The ambassador was convinced that it was the first step towards the restoration of the executive power of the king. He even took the liberty of expressing certain optimism when he wrote that although the strong cabala of the government opponents were being formed both, inside the country and beyond its borders, restoring order in the finances would definitely avert dangers threatening France. In the same letter, Staël also returned to the issue of Swiss regiments informing Gustav III that although

the fate of the Swiss in the French service had not been definitively decided yet, there should not be much difficulty with taking over those regiments for the Swedish pay³².

Meanwhile, the situation in France was getting more and more exacerbated. In late September the king gathered a few new troops around Versailles, including Flanders regiment. Calling the soldiers was interpreted by a part of public opinion as a provocation, the more so because Paris again lacked bread and emigration of the aristocracy had deprived many local artisans of work. The authorities of the capital, backed by a large group of deputies of the National Assembly, demanded that the Minister of Internal Affairs, the Count of Saint-Priest called the troops away. The king's advisers, however, ignored the imminent danger. Versailles underestimated both, the extent of the economic crisis and the impatience of the public caused by the passive resistance of Louis XVI who refrained from approving of the August edicts of the National Constituent Assembly. A seemingly minor incident was the signal for the outbreak of the second insurrection in Paris. On October 1, 1789 the officers of the king's personal guard were holding a welcoming banquet in Versailles for the officers of the Flanders regiment. When the royal family appeared in the courtroom revellers, warmed with wine, began to rise enthusiastic cheers. They also tore and trampled on tricolour ribbons, replacing them with ribbons in the colours of the king and the queen. The news of those events, announced throughout Paris on October 3, sparked widespread outrage. Almost instantly the press launched an anti-court campaign urging residents of the capital to march on Versailles³³. The next day Staël von Holstein wrote in his message about a great agitation which was to arouse public sentiment. He also criticised the conduct of the National Assembly which could not make quick and clear decisions. The ambassador was also convinced that Marie Antoinette had not stopped her intrigues against Necker and was going to remove him from the ministry. Describing the course of the ill-fated banquet of October 1, Staël formulated the opinion that it would have disastrous consequences for the royal couple. The reluctant ones would find an excellent opportunity to put forward the most absurd accusations against the court. Rebuking incomprehensible carelessness of the king and the queen, the ambassador consoled himself

³² See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, September 17, 24 and 27, 1789, RA, Gallica vol. 472. The issue of hiring the Swiss troops was very important from Gustav III's point of view. On November 6 the king noted on the last of the cited messages: "To order Staël to send infantry troops to Sweden. He is also to look for the possibility of recruitment in Germany. He must also collect information on the officers – their talents, characters, reputation". See *ibidem*. See also *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 125–128.

³³ See A. Soboul, *op. cit.*, pp. 86–88; A. Mathiez, *Rewolucja...*, pp. 76–78.

hoping that a march of the residents of the capital on the seat of Louis XVI could be prevented³⁴.

However, unfortunately, that hope was not fulfilled. As early as on October 8, 1789 Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein wrote to Gustav III that the consequences of the unfortunate dinner held by the king's personal guards turned out to be greater and faster than he could have predicted. In his previous message he had reported about the great ferment in Paris but had expected that the outrage of the capital residents would soon be soothed. The authorities might have achieved it if it had not been for a great shortage of bread, which forced people to abandon all the curbs and breach principles of obedience. According to the reports of the Swedish ambassador, the famous events of October 5 and 6, 1789 took the following course. Desperate and hungry women from the market halls first went to the town hall accusing the city authorities of bringing famine to Paris. Here, they decided to go to Versailles and demand bread from the king himself. Then, they rushed in to the municipal arsenal and took thence a weapon. They also took cannons. The National Guard could not stop them and in the evening of October 5 the first group of women came to Versailles. Meanwhile, La Fayette was going around Paris gathering troops to restore order. It turned out, however, that his guards were also going to go to the king's seat to take revenge on the personal guard for an insult to the national ribbon perpetrated during the banquet for the Flanders regiment. La Fayette did everything he could to stop them. Probably, the guards would not have marched out if it had not been for an incitement on the part of Parisian women who accused the soldiers of cowardice. In that situation, all La Fayette's efforts proved fruitless. He was told that either he would lead his troops and marched with them on Versailles or he would be immediately hanged. At about 5 p.m. La Fayette with guards set off towards Versailles. He was followed by 12 thousand women with 24 cannons. The Mayor of Paris, Jean Sylvain Bailly, had to hide that morning, as desperate women wanted to hang him accusing him of making the prices of grain so high. When Parisian women were marching to the headquarters of Louis XVI one of the officers, who knew that the king was hunting in the area of Meudon, went to him and told him about the accidents which had been taking place. After receiving the news, the king immediately returned to Versailles and the necessary defence arrangements were made. One thousand armed townspeople of Versailles were called in the vicinity of the palace. The royal guards were also in arms. All the gates were closed and the arrival of the women, meanwhile joined by a number of the armed men of the people, was calmly expected³⁵.

³⁴ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, October 4, 1789, RA, Gallica vol. 472; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 128–129.

³⁵ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, October 8, 1789, RA, Gallica vol. 472.

Quite unexpectedly, a trivial reason led to a confrontation between Versailles townspeople and the king's guards. Verbal skirmish turned into a fight which was the signal for the separation of a unit of the townspeople from the Royal Guard. That alarmed the court because the danger increased significantly as a result of a separation of Versailles townspeople. In that situation, the Royal Council decided to use gentle measures. Meanwhile, the crowd of women approached and 400 of them burst into the meeting room of the National Assembly demanding bread and a reduction of food prices from the deputies. The terrified assembly sent a deputation to the king asking him to listen to the people's demands. The king agreed to grant the audience to six women who were going to voice all complaints to him. Many other women also tried to enter the palace on that occasion but they were brutally stopped by the royal guards. It infuriated the crowd against the troops of that formation even more. However, the answer given by the king to the delegation of women released tension and the contented crowd headed back to Paris. The court concluded, therefore, that the danger had passed and guard troops were ordered to withdraw to the barracks. At the same time, however, new alarming news came. It was reported that huge masses of people were overflowing from all the gates of Paris and were heading towards Versailles. La Fayette completely lost his head and did not do anything that could avert imminent accidents. Those closest to the king did not know what to do, either. Some thought that the king should immediately leave Versailles and take refuge in the provinces. Others claimed that nothing would be more disastrous for the king than leaving his former residence. Fruitless deliberations of the Royal Council were being held and all the new ideas were generally contrary to the previous ones. Additionally, it was not known exactly what was happening in Paris. The ministers sent couriers but none of them returned. It was not until about 9 p.m. that La Fayette's aide came announcing his arrival. It completely changed the moods. Consternation gave way to uncontrollable desire for revenge on the part of the courtiers for the humiliation suffered that day. The king wondered for a long time what he should do in that situation. He even considered the possibility of leaving Versailles but in the end he agreed to see La Fayette. As a precaution, six carriages were prepared. They were to be ready to depart at all times. The people, however, did not let them beyond the palace premises³⁶.

Staël von Holstein believed that the idea of royal family's departure was the worst possible since it exposed all distinguished people from the royal environment to terrible danger. They would certainly become the first victims of the people's rage if they learnt about the king's escape. After that digression, the ambassador returned to the interrupted course of the story.

³⁶ See *ibidem*.

According to him, La Fayette did not arrive in Versailles before 11 p.m. He was immediately led to the king and promised the monarch that his soldiers would maintain the discipline and keep the order if only the king let them protect him. The king agreed for the solution and La Fayette returned to his troops. At night, however, the Versailles militia won their colleagues from Paris to the idea of the joint action against the king's guards and at about 3 a.m. persecutions of those poor men began. Some of them were killed and many wounded. At around 7 a.m. the queen's guards came to her bedroom warning her that there were too few of them to protect her effectively. They asked Marie Antoinette to immediately consider rescuing herself. Thus, the queen got up and went to the king's room. Numerous defeated soldiers from the guard also sought refuge in his apartments. A lot of blood was seen on the gallery and on the stairs. In the end, miserable king's guards surrendered and were taken into custody by the Paris National Guard. They put the caps of the capital militia on their heads and decked out in that way showed to the people. It was a signal to stop the bloody persecution. Then, the king was forced to agree to move to Paris with his family and court. The Estates-General gathered immediately at an extraordinary meeting, during which the king notified them of his intention to go to Paris. Upon learning of that, the assembly adopted a resolution that it would accompany the king in his move. It was an amazing and at the same time sad performance when the king, the queen, Monsieur, dukes, courtiers and officers were seen adorned with national ribbons. Equipped with safety passports issued for the entire court by La Fayette, at about 1 p.m. Their Highnesses set off to Paris. Bailly, who meanwhile had left his shelter, welcomed them in the city hall. That was how the frightening and humiliating for the royal family day ended. Staël finished his account by saying that what scared him most was the hatred between the aristocrats and the people's party which was promoting its vested interests in the name of love for the country and the names of the Orléans, only to take over all the power and put its leader [i.e. the Duke of Orléans – author's note] to the first place in the country. According to the ambassador, the two fighting parties, although for different reasons, wanted the king to arrive in Paris. Both contributed to achieving that goal. They agreed in one more point. They preferred to unleash a civil war rather than let a competitive party gain advantage. Fierce competition of both factions as well as the fact that the provinces could have felt offended by such a significant increase in the impact of the capital on both, the king and the National Assembly did not bode well for the future. The Swedish diplomat called it sinister, anticipating the arrival of the next still shake-ups and disturbances³⁷.

³⁷ See *ibidem*. The same message see *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 129–135. For more information on the events described by Staël see M. Mignet, *Historia rewolucji francuskiej od roku 1789 do 1814*, Warszawa 1890, pp. 72–77; A. Soboul, *op. cit.*, pp. 88–89; A. Mathiez, *Rewolucja...*, pp. 78–80; N. Åkeson,

According to Albert Mathiez, the change of king's residence was more important than taking over the Bastille. Louis XVI and the National Assembly were henceforth under the control of the people of Paris and La Fayette, the commander of the National Guard. The October events also meant the defeat of the monarchists who since the beginning of the revolution had encouraged the king to resist the implemented reforms. Their leader, Jean Joseph Mounier, abandoned the function of a chairman of the assembly and went to the Dauphiné to incite an uprising there. Mounier's example was followed by his political friends. Since, however, they did not manage to provoke anti-government disturbances anywhere, the leaders of the monarchists soon decided to leave France³⁸. Slightly differently the matter was perceived by Staël von Holstein, who on October 11, 1789 wrote in his next telegram that the recklessness of the French nation, its lack of character and, above all, its extreme violence and immorality made the greatest cruelties and absurdities possible. What Staël considered cruel and absurd was the fact that the leaders of the monarchists, Jean Joseph Mounier, Pierre Victor Malouet, Count Vivien and 15 other deputies were forced by the party of Orléans to leave Paris. The ambassador seemed to be convinced that anyone who opposed the will of the Duke of Orléans exposed himself to the great danger. Given the fact that the duke enjoyed great support from the lower social classes, the government could not dare take open action against him. Forestalling the results of the investigation against the perpetrators of the disturbances of October 5 and 6, Staël also allowed himself to state authoritatively that those were Alexandre de Lameth, Joseph Antoine Barnave and Adrien Duport who had provoked the uprising in Paris and had perpetrated violence to the king and the National Assembly. According to the ambassador, everything indicated that a civil war would soon break out in France. He was also horrified at the cruelty which the people inflicted on those considered to be their enemies. In the final part of the cited message he wrote that: "Barbarity with which the French treat the unfortunate victims who have died in this revolution cannot be described. Many king's guards were killed when they had already laid down their arms and the National Guard tried to save them. Heads of two of them were cut off and triumphantly brought to Paris. At the moment it is feared that hired arsonists may start fires in Paris. Many of the houses in this city have been marked. Mine is among them. However, I hope that Providence will save us from this disaster". In the next messages, Staël von Holstein informed Gustav III about the ups and downs of the Duke of Orléans. According to him, La Fayette forced the duke to leave Paris

op. cit., pp. 19–20; L. Villat, *op. cit.*, pp. 53–56; J. Baszkiewicz, *op. cit.*, pp. 222–223. It is also worth noticing that findings of those researchers differ in some details from the account of the Swedish diplomat.

³⁸ See A. Mathiez, *Rewolucja...*, pp. 80–81. For more detailed discussion on the issue mentioned here see J. Egret, *La révolution des notables: Mounier et les monarchiens. 1789*, Paris 1950.

threatening to reveal all his intrigues. The frightened duke went to London with a fictional government mission which he had been commissioned just to help him in a honourable retreat. However, the inhabitants of Boulogne stopped the Duke of Orléans preventing him from departing to England and then four officials of the local magistrate came to the capital asking whether he could be let free. They received the answer that they should not interfere in his departure. In the account written on October 18 the ambassador finally allowed himself a note of optimism, stating that the king's moving to Paris, initially regarded as a great misfortune, might contribute to regaining people's trust lost at the beginning of the revolution³⁹.

On October 22, 1789, Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein, carrying out the earlier orders of Gustav III, compiled a detailed report on the current situation of the French state. Due to the importance of wording included there, it certainly deserves quoting its most important passages. The ambassador began his account by recalling several important events from the beginning of the revolution omitted in his previous messages. He decided on that procedure because he believed that the knowledge of those facts would help the king to better understand everything that had happened in France. In the first place, he referred to the events of July 14. According to him, the news of Necker's dismissal led to widespread consternation in the capital. As a sign of their grief, people demanded closing all Paris theatres, which was done immediately. Consternation turned into rage when the Prince of Lamballe [in fact the regiment was commanded by the Prince of Lambesc – author's note] led a charge on the people with his Royal Allemand regiment and chased them all the way to the Tuileries Palace. That resulted in immediate the armament of the embittered people. Paris would have certainly been burnt and looted at night from Monday to Tuesday if the Paris National Guard had not been armed on Monday which prevented the unrest. At Versailles nothing was known about what was happening in the capital. The queen and the Polignacs were amusing themselves listening to the concert held in the conservatory of the Versailles Palace when people were taking over the Bastille in Paris. Louis Marie, Viscount of Noailles was the first one who brought the king news of the capturing of the Bastille, the murder of Launay and Flesselles and a terrible disorder prevailing in the capital. Mr Bertier, the intendant of Paris, in the presence of Noailles denied the news telling the king that peace was prevailing in the city. According to the ambassador, it was a proof of the complete incompetence of those responsible for

³⁹ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, October 11 (apostille No. 2), 15 and 18, 1789, RA, Gallica vol. 472; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 135–137. See also A. Söderhjelm, *op. cit.*, p. 210. For the inside story of the escape of the Duke of Orléans from Paris (Staël appeared to be well-informed on the issue) see A. Mathiez, *Rewolucja...*, pp. 81–82; Ludwik Filip, *Pamiętniki z czasów Wielkiej Rewolucji*, W. Dłuski, J. Baszkiewicz (ed.), Warszawa 1988, pp. 86–90.

safety and order in the French capital. Commenting on the events of July 17 Staël did not hide his condemnation of reckless advisers of Louis XVI. He wrote that when on Friday the king had gone to Paris, 200 thousand armed men were in the city streets. When the royal carriage surrounded by a huge crowd was barely progressing towards the town hall, the king was exposed to the great danger. At any moment he could have been shot by a desperate man from a fully armed crowd. There were some casualties. The guard lieutenant was injured riding alongside the carriage of the king and a woman was even killed. According to Staël, it could be considered a miracle that the ruler returned to Versailles safe and sound⁴⁰.

Describing the situation in the National Assembly, Staël von Holstein stated that it was divided into four main parties. The first one was an old aristocratic party. The members of the group had set themselves the objective of maintaining the *ancien régime* at all costs. The ambassador did not have a sentimental attachment to that group since he wrote that its useless efforts resulted only in provoking rage of its enemies, enhancing discontent of the people and they served a pretext for the new revolutions that led to ever greater humiliation of the nobility and clergy. In his opinion, the aristocratic party was the most despised and it also despised everybody. The advantage of the party was that it was committed to the throne and the entire queen's environment along with herself sympathised with it. A natural leader of the party was the Count of Artois. According to Staël, it was the aristocratic party that mostly contributed to running into even greater difficulties since those were the aristocrats who were responsible for the ill-fated dinner held by the guards of the king. They led to the outbreak of the rebellion in Paris and they could put the blame for its effects on no-one but themselves. The ambassador was convinced that the party was doomed to defeat in confrontation with its opponents. For what is 100 thousand noblemen against 24 million people, what are officers without troops? The interests of the aristocratic party in the assembly were defended by the people whose behaviour, in Staël von Holstein's opinion, resulted in the public opinion's loathing the very name of the aristocracy and led to spreading rumours about the existence of an aristocratic conspiracy directed against the people. First of all, those were Jean Jacques Duval d'Epréménail, "a famous parliamentarian, the most committed supporter of the principle of an action in accordance with applicable law" and Father Jean Siffrein Maury, "a contemptible man". According to the ambassador, those two were so clever and articulate that they were able to gain some influence over deputies⁴¹.

⁴⁰ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, October 22, 1789, RA, Gallica vol. 472.

⁴¹ See *ibidem*.

In the further part of his report, Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein wrote as follows: "I must also mention a group which includes all the courtiers, all the bishops and all those who have been harmed by the new order. They would like a return to an arbitrary government and are therefore despised by all the honest people. On the margins of the party, the only honest, the only well-disposed Mr Mounier acts, defamed by fierce democrats who would identify him with the aristocratic party. He was the first to start a revolution in the Dauphiné. The course of events has not changed his former views and today he is more moderate. Mounier is as far from the aristocracy as from democracy. He is convinced of the necessity of maintaining the monarchy and the need for giving it executive power to maintain order. He is an admirer of the English constitution, a supporter of two chambers in the Legislative Assembly and the absolute *veto*, thus, the order far from the one that is being established. Mr Mounier is related to the Marquis [Trophime Gérard – author's note] of Lally-Tollendal, an eloquent and honest man. The Count [Stanislas Marie – author's note] of Clermont-Tonnerre achieved fame thanks to the noble way in which he presides the assembly and thanks to the ease with which he speaks. His opinion has an effect on all honest people in the National Assembly and ministers of the king, who, fighting against the aristocrats, would be ready to see him as an ally. Both, Clermont and king's ministers are hostile towards the democrats, whose intrigues aim at plunging the country into an anarchy. The noble goals set by the party led by Mounier may, however, prove to be very harmful due to the self-love of its leader. Mr Mounier is ready to plunge the kingdom into the fire of war because of the two chambers and the absolute *veto*. And no matter what his political ideas are, his views are impractical and the fear of the aristocracy is so great that there is no chance of creating the second chamber which would certainly become the aristocratic asylum over time". It is hard to resist the impression that the Swedish diplomat clearly sympathised with the political programme of the group headed by Mounier. However, he did not accept his methods. In the next part of his report, he wrote that there were a lot of cabala and conspiracies in the National Assembly which broke it from the inside and prevented fast and effective work. Mounier's group also began to spread the opinion that the National Constituent Assembly could not vote on sovereign resolutions in Paris and, therefore, should move its meetings to the Dauphiné. Staël assumed, however, that if that happened, it would be a signal to start a civil war. He also did not approve of Mounier's idea of convening the Dauphiné provincial estates to oppose them to the National Assembly. He believed that other provinces would follow the example, which would directly result in the destabilisation of the country. Having devoted so much attention to the group which he clearly sympathised with, Staël von

Holstein did not fail to point out that both, Mounier and Lally-Tollendal had already left Paris⁴².

The leader of the “conspiracy rather than the party”, Louis Philippe, Duke of Orléans was also absent from the capital. His departure to London had been reported in the ambassador’s previous messages. According to Staël, who had long despised the royal cousin, the Duke of Orléans was one of the greatest enemies of Louis XVI. Yet, he lacked courage, what he demonstrated during the July and October events in Paris. The ambassador was convinced that if the duke had shown courage and determination, he could have become the ruler of the kingdom. Staying on the sidelines of events, he had lost his chance. According to Staël, the party of Orléans consisted of Louis René, Count La Touche-Treville, the chancellor of the Duke of Orléans, Armand Louis, Duke of Biron, his friend, and Charles Alexis, Marquis of Sillery, the captain of his guard. It was also rumoured that the former Minister of Finance, Charles de Calonne, staying for a long time in London, remained in the service of the duke. The ambassador was also inclined to believe in the rumours that the cabala of the Orléans was financed by the English court. Sums that its supporters distributed among the people exceed, in fact, the financial capacity of the duke. While Staël was writing his report, the news reached Paris that the Duke of Orléans began efforts to win the nomination to the position of the Ambassador of France to the court of St. James. Describing very influential figures in the assembly: Honoré Gabriel, Count of Mirabeau and Charles Maurice de Talleyrand, Bishop of Autun, Staël von Holstein wrote in his report: “The famous Count of Mirabeau, who sells himself to everybody, has various talents, intellect and eloquence of such uncommon nature that he can subdue even those who despise him. The man despises all appearances, not so much because of the purity of his intentions, but because he is sure that he always manages to adjust the measures which he uses to the intended purpose”. According to the ambassador, Mirabeau absolutely wanted to become a minister. An obstacle in achieving that goal, however, was the aversion of Necker who would have never agreed to remain in the ministry with him. Aware of the influence of Mirabeau in the assembly, the government tried to bribe him. It was not an easy task as, in the opinion of the Swedish diplomat, the efforts related to Mirabeau had to be made not only every day, but almost every hour. “It is, in fact, a busy and a changeable mind. He does not remain faithful even to his own ideas and no one can predict what he will say or do in the nearest future”. According to Staël von Holstein, the only man who Mirabeau admired in the assembly was the man to whom he had once caused great harm, revealing the issue of his secret correspondence with the court of Berlin. A secret correspondent

⁴² See *ibidem*.

of the Prussian court was nobody else than Charles Maurice de Talleyrand, once called Father de Périgord, the current Bishop of Autun. At a time when Staël was making out his report, the former enemies had reportedly already been in perfectly good terms with each other. The ambassador wrote about Talleyrand as follows: "The advantage of the Bishop of Autun is that he has not participated in any intrigue in the assembly. The bishop is an intelligent man, suitable for policy because of the accuracy and reliability of his beliefs. His ambitions, however, are far greater than his fortune. He also has ambitions to become a minister. However, he is reasonable enough to postpone the moment of an entry into the ministry where Necker is difficult to replace and where many urgent and difficult problems have accumulated. Presently, he does not pose a threat to the public peace". However, the ambassador paid attention to the fact that in the assembly the Bishop of Autun collaborated with Father Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès, "the most proud and most exalted systematic logician" who "is certainly better to read than listened to". According to the Swedish diplomat, Sieyès was incapable of intriguing, very brave about showing the assembly his contempt for its pointless deliberations⁴³. Staël von Holstein was definitely hostile towards the group which was considered democratic. He wrote about it as follows: "Separately from the Bishop of Autun, separately from Sieyès and Mirabeau, separately from all the honest and talented people, a cabala is developing. It has allied with the conspiracy of the Duke of Orléans. Bandyng demagogic slogans of freedom for the people and putting forth demands to adopt a democratic constitution, the party will use all possible means to incite the people and stir up unrest both, in Paris and in the provinces. All this aims at overthrowing of the government where only Necker is to be kept due to his loans at bankers and the popularity among the people. These people would be willing to sacrifice him as well if he was not useful any longer. They have made terrible accusations against the government, set about the most vile rumours and resorted to various tricks to cause a shortage of bread on the market. At the head of this party which, in the assembly, is supported by the Bretons and all the unsettled spirits, is Mr [Adrien – author's note] Duport. Valued especially for the fact that he has never shared the prejudices of his corporation. His character, however, is insincere and a way of expressing himself, difficult. An enthusiastic frondist, having false understanding and ambition without measures, he always talks about freedom and aims at the ministry. Mr [Joseph Antoine – author's note] Barnave, a deputy of the third estate, follows his example and shares, as far as possible, all his views. But he plays a secondary role, staying in Duport's shade. Being the second to do good, he would like to be the first in evil. He is an intelligent, talented man with character but without funds.

⁴³ See *ibidem*.

He has become repulsive to many honest people because of the severity he showed during the massacres in Paris. Alexandre de Lameth is a young man, completely ruined, ambitious, of an untamed character who has revealed, however, neither any talent nor extraordinary wisdom. He is not popular due to his vindictiveness and arrogance. The party to which these three men belong was called for a long time the party of La Fayette. Recently, however, La Fayette has moved slightly aside from the above-mentioned three. La Fayette is a very able man but does not play the role he would like to. To his misfortune, his ambitions are greater than the possibility of fulfilling them. Those who know him well say that only he is able to save France or at least save it from the total ruin, having the last shreds of power that has remained in this country in his hand. The fate of the kingdom depends on the peace in Paris. This, in turn, is in the hands of La Fayette. It is said that he would like to give the king an opportunity to leave Paris to convince the provinces that the king is not a prisoner of the capital. Those who know the marquis's inclination to democratic government believe that he is somehow associated with the rebels, always inclined to provoke further unrest". Staël von Holstein did not, however, believe in the accusations and was convinced that La Fayette, a strong supporter of the restoration of the disrupted order, could really play the role of a providential man in France⁴⁴.

The ambassador did not have very good opinion on the French ministry. In his view, among all the ministers only Necker stood out due to many talents, intelligence and education. At the same time, the deputies favoured the Keeper of the Seals, Archbishop of Bordeaux [Jérôme Marie Champion de Cicé – author's note], who in June made the estates unite, encouraging with his example most of the clergy to unite with the representation of the third estate. In the final parts of his report Staël von Holstein wrote that: "The position of the king is the same as always. He is liked, he has even gained certain popularity but this nation is so erratic that you cannot draw any positive conclusions from that. It is for the love of the king that he was forced to come to Paris. The king's guards were massacred because the people wanted to serve the king". According to Staël, "the queen has gained a bit in the eyes of the public opinion due to heroic courage which she has shown. The lesson taught, however, had been so severe that she is commonly believed to be determined not to involve in politics anymore". As for Monsieur, according to the ambassador, he had ceased to play a role in politics. Due to his nothingness, he had also managed to avoid both, love and hatred of the people. Writing his report, Staël knew nothing of the princes of the blood who had left the country after July 17. He did not imagine that they were staying in touch with their supporters in France. He was deeply convinced that emigrants were

⁴⁴ See *ibidem*.

not at that time any threat to the public peace arousing no interest of wider audience. Staël supposed that the princes would return home only if there was a civil war and some of the warring parties decided to call them back⁴⁵.

The image of French political scene presented by Staël did not differ in fact from what modern historians write about it. His previous reports had also been correct. In fact, the ambassador was generally well informed on the events taking place in France and even if he was wrong in some small details, he could successfully penetrate the essence and render the atmosphere of changes, which he was an eye witness of. What seems to be the most interesting is the fact that Gustav III, receiving such accurate and insightful reports from Paris, was not satisfied with them at all. It is true that he had written down his negative feelings before receiving the account of October 22, however, on November 17, 1789 the king made a note according to which Ulric Gustaf Franc was to order the Secretary of the Paris legation, Silfversparre, to make out a detailed report on the situation in France. According to the king, due to the fact that Staël was Necker's son-in-law his accounts were biased. On the same day, the Secretary of State wrote to Aron Isak Silfversparre ordering him to convey to the king as many details of what was happening in France as possible. On that occasion, he explained to him that Gustav III could not understand anything of the messages sent to him by the ambassador. Reminding Silfversparre that Staël, as Necker's son-in-law, would always be in his opinions more or less biased, he ordered him to simultaneously maintain fully neutral towards the events taking place on the French political scene obliging him to comment the events impartially. In that way, a regular correspondence between Aron Isak Silfversparre and the court of Stockholm was established. The Secretary of the Paris mission began, in secret from his superior, preparing separate reports for the king and the Secretary of State. He quickly gained full confidence of his both correspondents. Franc had the best opinion especially on Silfversparre. Reports of the Secretary of the Paris embassy, however, appealed also to the king. Silfversparre's views differed fundamentally from those of his superior. Being a declared royalist with decidedly conservative views he did not share the liberal inclinations towards Staël von Holstein and his unhidden

⁴⁵ See *ibidem*. The same message see *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 137–146; For its summary see A. Söderhjelm, *op. cit.*, p. 214; N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, pp. 12–16; A. Geffroy, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 93 and fol. For more information on the problems described by Staël together with the description of the main political groups of the National Constituent Assembly and their leaders see M. Żywczyński, *Historia powszechna 1789–1870*, 4th ed., Warszawa 1977, pp. 36–39; A. Soboul, *op. cit.*, pp. 90–93; A. Mathiez, *Rewolucja...*, pp. 80–83; L. Villat, *op. cit.*, pp. 15–16; J. Baszkiewicz, *Historia Francji*, 2nd ed., Wrocław 1978, pp. 408–409. See also J. Baszkiewicz, S. Meller, *Rewolucja francuska 1789–1794. Społeczeństwo obywatelskie*, Warszawa 1983, pp. 9–16. For more information on the opponents of the changes happening in France in 1789 see J. Godechot, *La contre-révolution française. Doctrine et action. 1789–1804*, Paris 1961, pp. 22–55.

sympathy for the moderate trend of the French Revolution. Silfversparre's Parisian accounts filled with criticism of France, the French and his own superior, are generally disappointing and incomparable with the in-depth and acute messages of Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein⁴⁶.

THE TURIN MISSION OF THE BARON VON REHAUSEN

In September 1789 Gustav III decided to implement his idea of giving refuge in Sweden to Charles, Count of Artois and Louis Joseph, Prince of Condé, who left France to protest against the behaviour of Louis XVI on July 17. The task of delivering royal letters to both princes was given to a young diplomat, Gotthard Mauritz, Baron von Rehausen. Born in September 1761 in the aristocratic family (his mother was Henrietta Maria, Countess von Cronhielm af Flosta) from his earliest years he served in the Royal Guard where he rose to the rank of lieutenant. Assigned in January 1788 to the Swedish mission in Copenhagen as a "Legation Chevalier" he was moved next year to the Hague where he took a post of a secretary of the local diplomatic mission. The mission entrusted to him by the king was therefore the first serious job in his short diplomatic career⁴⁷. It can be also thought that the letters of Gustav III to the French emigrants were given to Rehausen only because the Stockholm court believed that the Count of Artois resided in Holland. Meanwhile, the brother of Louis XVI had already left that country. Saddled with the task of delivering the king's correspondence, the Secretary of the Hague mission set off in search of both distinguished recipients. On October 10, 1789 Rehausen sent his first report from the commissioned mission to Stockholm. According to the king's command, he first went to Paris to find out about the place of the count's residence. Having gained required information he followed the king's brother to Switzerland and from there to Turin. Shortly after his arrival in the capital of Piedmont, he wrote a ticket to the

⁴⁶ See a note of Gustav III on the message of E.M. Staël v. Holstein of October 15, 1789, RA, Gallica vol. 472; U.G. Franc to A.I. Silfversparre, Stockholm, November 17, 1789, RA, Huvudarkivet, Kabinettet/UD, B1B, vol. 125; A. Söderhjelm, *op. cit.*, pp. 202–210. Ulric Gustaf Franc expressed an explicitly positive opinion on the Secretary of Parisian Legacy in the letter written on January 31, 1791 to Niklas v. Jakobson. The issue concerned appointing the former Secretary of the Presidential Office, Pehr Olof von Asp, for the position of a Swedish emissary in Istanbul. The position left by him was to be occupied by Silfversparre. According to Franc, he was "an intelligent, honest and reliable boy". What seemed even more important to the Secretary of State, he was "virtuous and wholeheartedly attached to the principles of religion and morality, which were instilled in him in childhood" as cited in *ibidem*, p. 203. See also Z. Anusik, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

⁴⁷ See A. Söderhjelm, *op. cit.*, p. 149; N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, p. 18. For basic information on Rehausen see *Den introducerade svenska adelns ättartavlor* [further on: *Svenska adelns*], G. Elgenstierna (ed.), vol. VI, Stockholm 1931, pp. 194–195.

Prince of Henin to tell him about the purpose of his visit. He got the answer that the Count of Artois would see him the next day. Thus, on October 10 Gotthard Mauritz von Rehausen visited the Palace of Montcailles, where the Count of Artois was staying together with the Sardinian royal family, to hand him the letter of Gustav III. He was received very graciously and a letter was read in his presence. He was told that he would receive the answer in the next few days. He was also thanked with gratitude for such a generous offer. The count spoke to him about the issues of the war in Finland, wished armies of Gustav III success but passed the situation in France over in silence. Because the second correspondent of Gustav III, the Prince of Condé, had left for a few days from Turin to Genoa, Rehausen decided to wait for his return in the capital of Piedmont. During his "pursuit" of the Count of Artois the envoy of the King of Sweden spent one day in Paris. There, he saw half dismantled Bastille and participated in the meeting of the National Assembly at Versailles. He heard the speech of the Count of Mirabeau and "long debates on regrettable issues while decisions on the really important questions were taken in silence". According to Rehausen, what had happened in the French capital was beyond belief. He was especially shocked to see people brought to the lampposts who offered no resistance to their executioners. Observing those scenes with the letters to two immigrants most hated by the public in his pocket, Rehausen could feel a quiver of anxiety and emotions, accompanying him until the end of his stay in Paris. In the message on October 10 he also recounted to his king an unpleasant adventure of a young Dutchman who had been in Paris shortly before the revolution and had been unlucky to be seen at the Duchess's of Polignac. People stopped him in the street shouting that it was the duchess disguised as a man. They wanted to take him to the infamous lamp post when, in an act of despair and desperation, in the street full of people he did not hesitate to visually demonstrate to his persecutors that he was certainly not a disguised woman. According to Rehausen, the ladies passing that way were extremely interested in the sight of an audacious young man. One of the leaders of the Swedish opposition, Baron Gustaf Adolf Reuterholm was present in Paris at that time. After the meeting of the *Riksdag* in 1789 he went into the voluntary exile. Rehausen did not fail to inform his royal correspondent about that fact, either⁴⁸.

On October 17 the young diplomat informed the king about his subsequent actions in Turin. Immediately after the return of Condé from Genoa Rehausen delivered the king's letter to him. He did not have the slightest problem with it as the day he informed Jean Thérèse, Marquis of Autichamp, about his mission he was received by the prince. With undisguised delight, he read the letter of Gustav III. He expressed exceptional gratitude and satisfaction with its

⁴⁸ See G.M. v. Rehausen to Gustav III, Turin, October 10, 1789, RA, Gallica vol. 501.

content and he paid many compliments to the King of Sweden “who, heading his army, fights for war fame, traditionally prised in the Condé House”. The prince invited Rehausen for dinner and sat him next to himself. After dinner, he gave the king’s letter to his daughter, son and grandson so that they could read it. Then, the letter was read by the Duchess of Polignac, her daughter, the Duchess of Guiche, the Marquise of Autichamp and Mrs Lambert. Armand Jules, Duke of Polignac, Joseph Louis, Duke of Caylus, the Count of Choiseul [probably Jean Baptiste Armand de Choiseul-Meuse – author’s note] and many other distinguished exiles congratulated Rehausen on being entrusted with such an honourable mission. On October 16 the Prince of Condé gave his answer to the envoy of Gustav III. Then, he invited him to his daughter, Duchess Louise, who talked to Rehausen about Sweden and the last *Riksdag* comparing behaviour of both rulers towards the estate assemblies, hardly favourable to the King of France. Condé’s son and grandson asked the Swedish diplomat to remind them to his ruler about whom they talked in the most flattering way. On the same evening, Rehausen was summoned by the Count of Artois who gave him his answer and said that he was very grateful for the invitation of Gustav III of Sweden but he would not be able to accept it for the time being. He complimented the ruler of Sweden calling him the longest and most loyal ally of France. The count also assured Rehausen that he would never forget what Gustav III had done for him. After a visit to the count, the young diplomat experienced a moment of uncertainty associated with the doubt of a ceremonial nature. Namely, he did not like the address on the message for Gustav III. However, not having any orders in that matter, he received the count’s answer as if it was delivered to him. While in Turin, Rehausen stayed in the same house as the Duke and the Duchess of Polignac. The Polignacs showed great interest in his mission. The duke paid many compliments aimed at Gustav III. The duchess also talked to him about the king, inquired about Curt von Stedingk, whom she knew from Paris, and ended the conversation with expressing gratitude towards Gustav III on behalf of all French emigrants staying in Turin at that time. According to Rehausen, the Polignacs did not intend, however, to stay in the capital of Piedmont. In view of the reluctant attitude of the King of Sardinia towards them, Victor Amadeus III, who refused to see them, they decided to go to Rome⁴⁹. Shortly after sending that message, Rehausen also left Turin.

On November 2, 1789 he was in Paris, from where he sent Gustav III an encrypted message about the talks in the capital of Piedmont since the Prince of Condé asked him about the nature of the relation between Sweden and England, Holland and Prussia. He wanted to know as many details concerning the conditions of a future agreement of the Stockholm court with the

⁴⁹ See G.M. v. Rehausen to Gustav III, Turin, October 17, 1789, *ibidem*.

Triple Alliance as possible. Without the proper instructions for such discussions Rehausen dismissed the prince saying that cooperation of Gustav III with the courts of the Triple Alliance was a consequence of a difficult situation which Sweden was in after the invasion of the Danes. The next day, however, Rehausen spoke on the same subject with a trusted adviser to the prince, Jean Thérèse, Marquis of Autichamp. He also asked the Swedish diplomat about the nature of the relation between Sweden and the Triple Alliance. Therefore, he spoke of the alleged displacement of Dutch and Prussian troops towards the French border. In a word, he seemed to believe that the Triple Alliance countries would be ready to intervene in France in the name of restoring the old order there. The marquis also wanted to know how in that case the Stockholm court would behave. Rehausen said that the mission entrusted to him was the best proof of the fact that Gustav III had a keen interest in the affairs of France and wished good luck to all those who wished to restore the peace and order there. Showing a lot of common sense, the Swedish diplomat tried, however, to weaken the ardour of his interlocutor stating that he did not believe in the veracity of reports about preparations for intervention in France as the attention of the court of Berlin was focused on completely different issues. After those talks, Rehausen came to the conclusion that from the point of view of Gustav III's business it would be good if his envoy to Genoa visited Turin several times in order to figure out the actions and intentions of French expatriates. The envoy of the Swedish king was convinced that the gaining power coalition of the best French nobility, who had found refuge in Piedmont, would one day return to France, if not armed, it would be through intrigues. Rehausen also predicted that the King of Sardinia would not hesitate to adopt the role of the protector and ally of the French exiles. If the latter ones received the armed forces at their disposal, they would certainly want to use it. According to the Swedish diplomat, the hopes of French princes were not going to be fulfilled soon and the King of France had no reason to fear anything from them. In such a situation, according to Rehausen, Sweden should restrict itself for the time being and just carefully observe the actions of the Turin emigration refraining from any official undertakings. Faithful to that line of reasoning, during his second stay in Paris, Rehausen implied that the offer of Gustav III had merely been the result of an old intimacy of the King of Sweden with the two princes whose fate could not be indifferent to him because of the memory of Louis XV⁵⁰. The young diplomat obviously could not have foreseen that his trip to Turin was the first step on the road to establishing the

⁵⁰ See G.M. v. Rehausen to Gustav III, Paris, November 2, 1789, *ibidem*, Gallica vol. 472. The message was sent together with the post of the embassy and thus it was included in the collection of the accounts of E.M. Staël v. Holstein. For more information on the Turin period of emigration of the Count of Artois see J. Godechot, *La contre-révolution...*, pp. 161–163.

close cooperation between the Stockholm court and the French emigration. For the time being, however, Gustav III had to deal with other, much more urgent issues of political and military nature.

AROUND DIPLOMACY AND WAR: POLITICS OF GUSTAV III IN THE PERIOD OF THE SECOND RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN

In the second half of 1789 French issues were by no means the main subject of the concern of Gustav III since the king continued the war with Russia and, contrary to his expectations, he could not achieve a definite victory. Initially, he placed great hopes associated with the activities of his fleet but very soon he was disappointed by it as on July 26–28, 1789 the fleet of the line, commanded by Charles, Prince of Sweden, skirmished quite an unfortunate sea battle near the island of Öland with numerically weaker Russian squadron of Admiral Vasilii Y. Chichagov. In the evening of July 28, remaining in full combat efficiency, the Russian squadron managed to break away from the Swedish fleet. For fear of being cut off from their main operational base, on July 30, 1789 the Swedish fleet anchored in the roadstead of Karlskrona. On August 2, Chichagov, who in the meantime had received substantial reinforcements, appeared in Karlskrona and blocked the Swedish fleet there. In late August, however, the Russians ceased the blockade and withdrew their ships to Reval and Kronstadt. The departure of the Russian fleet from Karlskrona did not entail any consequences, since by the end of the navigation season the Swedish fleet of the line took no serious action on the Baltic Sea. What is worse, on August 24, 1789 Swedish skerry (coastal) fleet commanded by Admiral Carl August Ehrensvärd suffered a crushing defeat during the Battle of Svensksund. The consequences of the defeat proved to be extremely serious. Driving the Swedish fleet from the estuary of the Kymmene made Gustav III abandon land operations against strongholds of Fredrikshamn and Vyborg. The other consequence of losing at Svensksund was capturing the Högfors fortress by the Russians and the destruction of the remnants of the Swedish skerry fleet at the Battle of Öresund. Thus, the war at sea ended in a complete disaster for the Swedes⁵¹. The Swedish army did slightly better on land. As early as on June 13 the Savolax Finnish brigade, consisting of 800 soldiers under the command of Major General Curt von Stedingk defeated the superior forces of General Ivan I. Michelson at the Battle of Pärrosalmi.

⁵¹ See E. Kosiarsz, *Wojny na Bałtyku w X–XIX w.*, Gdańsk 1978, pp. 293–301; R.C. Anderson, *Naval Wars in the Baltic during the Sailing Ship Epoch 1522–1810*, London 1910, p. 254 and fol.; I. de Madariaga, *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great*, New Haven–London 1981, p. 410; R.N. Bain, *Gustavus III and his Contemporaries. An Overlooked Chapter of Eighteenth Century History*, vol. II, London 1894, pp. 87–88; B. Hildebrand, O. Nikula, *Ehrensvärd Carl August*, in: *Svenskt Biografiskt Lexikon* [further on: *SBL*], vol. XII, Stockholm 1949, pp. 452–453.

In the second battle near the same village, the Russians defeated Stedingk who retreated far north of Finland. However, in late July Stedingk returned south, defeated the Russians at Parkumäki and then (in October) stopped their counterattack at Laitasilka. Meanwhile, the main Swedish army, under the command of the king, took actions against the Fredrikshamn fortress. Gustav III defeated the Russians in Uttismalm and Liikala but for the next three weeks remained in one place, even though the victories had opened him the way to Fredrikshamn. Thus, he was defeated at Svensksund and at Kaippais, which made his all army withdraw. A difficult situation of the Swedes improved slightly when the volunteer units from Dalarna, under the command of Gustaf Mauritz Armfelt, arrived at the theatre of the military operations. Dalecarlians won the island of Elgsö thanks to a daring attack which allowed the Swedes to finish the campaign in a slightly better mood. In early November the two armies left for the winter quarters and Gustav III returned to Stockholm.

At the same time, the situation on the front of the Russo-Turkish war had also fundamentally changed. In April 1789 Russian forces seized Galati. On August 1 the corps of General Alexander Suvorov supported by the Austrian army commanded by Josias Friedrich, Prince von Sachsen-Coburg, defeated the Turks at Focşani. In September, in turn, Suvorov defeated the Turks on the river Râmnicu Sărat, the Austrians won the Belgrade and Grigory Potemkin seized (in October) Bender (Bendery) and Akkerman. At the same time Prince Nikolai V. Repnin defeated the Turkish army at Iskatcha and started the siege of Izmail. The Russian victory over the Turks significantly worsened the strategic situation of Sweden during the campaign of 1789. Gustav III started frantic efforts to obtain assistance from the Triple Alliance countries. Since the defeat of the Turkish forces caused considerable concern both, in Berlin and London, everything indicated that the Swedish king would be able to get at least significant financial support from their side. Since the spring of 1789, the Stockholm court had conducted negotiations over concluding a subsidy treaty with Prussia. Although the initial conditions of the future agreement were agreed with Adrian Heinrich von Borcke, the envoy of Prussia to Stockholm, Gustav III did not want to accept a point (introduced to the text of the Berlin Convention) that provided the seizure of Pomerania, which the court of Berlin wanted to keep in its hands until the repayment of Swedish debts by the Prussian army. In that situation, at the beginning of July 1789, Gustav III ordered Ulric Gustaf Franc who, together with Carl Wilhelm, Count von Düben, and Pehr Olof von Asp, was dealing with all matters related to foreign policy of the state in the king's absence from Stockholm, to authorise Gustaf Adam von Nolcken in London

to enter into the subsidy treaty negotiations with the English court⁵². Ultimately, however, the Swedish diplomats succeeded in 1789 to negotiate only two Prussian loans: 733 thousand Swedish *riksdalers* at 5% and two million *riksdalers* at 3,5% annually. Both liabilities were secured in Pomerania but the Berlin court resigned from its right to take the province under its own administration. What was of a much greater importance for Gustav III was signing a subsidy treaty with Turkey in Istanbul on July 11, 1789. Pursuant to its provisions, Sweden would receive one million *piastres* annually by the end of the war and ten million *piastres* at the time of signing the peace treaty, provided, however, that it did not decide to conclude a separate peace with Russia. However, Gustav III delayed the ratification of the treaty until December 25, 1789 waiting for the results of discussions with the Triple Alliance and carefully probing the attitude of the court of St. Petersburg concerning the possible start of peace negotiations⁵³.

Yet, he wanted to talk with Catherine II either directly or through the Triple Alliance countries. He strongly rejected the offer of a French mediation which was presented to him in September 1789 by *chargé d'affaires* of France at Stockholm, Jean de Gausson. On October 13 Gustav III gave the Secretary of State, Ulric Gustaf Franc, written instructions on how to prepare answers to the note submitted by the French diplomat. The king wanted to tell Gausson that he would not finish the war with Russia until he achieved significant victories and made the empress accept his terms, namely: stopping Russian expansion against Turkey, restoring the previous Russian-Swedish border and preventing Catherine II from interfering in the internal affairs of his country and since so far there had been no indication that the empress wished to accept the Swedish request, the war would continue. The king also

⁵² See Gustav III to U.G. Franc, Peipola, April 23/24; Liikala camp, July 5 and 6; Kymmenegård, August 20, 1789, *Bref till Wachtmeister och Franc*, pp. 95–101, 120–121.

⁵³ W. Kalinka was quite right when he wrote that: "The campaign of 1789, especially the land campaign, could be forgotten. The war forces on both sides were weak, the leaders incompetent, the Russian borders defended by fortresses which the Swedes were unable to capture. At the end of the year, combatants remained where they had been at the beginning, the Swedes on one side of the border, the Russians on the other". See idem, *Sejm Czteroletni*, 5th ed., vol. II, part 1, Kraków 1896, p. 196. See also R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, pp. 82–89; L. Stavenow, *Den gustavianska tiden 1772–1809, Sveriges historia till våra dagar*, E. Hildebrand, L. Stavenow (eds), vol. X, Stockholm 1925, pp. 188–194; O. Jägerskiöld, *Den svenska utrikespolitikens historia*, vol. II, part 2 (1721–1792), Stockholm 1957, p. 331; B. Hennings, *Gustav III. En biografi*, Stockholm 1957, pp. 273–275; Gustav III to G.M. Armfelt, letters from June 3 to September 18, 1789, *Bref till Armfelt*, pp. 59–118; A.H. v. Borcke to Gustav III, Stockholm, August 5, 1789, RA, Borussica vol. 180; I. de Madariaga, *op. cit.*, p. 410; E. Tegnér, *Gustaf Mauritz Armfelt. Studier ur Armfelts efterlemnade papper samt andra handskrifna och tryckta källor*, vol. I (*Armfelt och Gustaf III*), Stockholm 1883, pp. 301–302, p. 307 and fol., 315. For the best publication on the course of 1789 campaign see L. Ericson, *Kriget till lands 1788–1790*, in: *Gustav III:s ryska krig*, G. Artéus (ed.), Stockholm 1992, pp. 83–104; J. Glete, *Kriget till sjöss*, in: *ibidem*, pp. 148–156.

wished to inform Gausсен that despite the reluctant French position, Turkey had concluded a formal treaty with Sweden, giving it a subsidy of ten million *piastres* or four million *riksdalers*. Gustav III also ordered Franc to write, justifying the refusal to accept the French mediation offer, that the French should best know the reasons why he had been forced to accept the offer submitted to him by the three allied courts since he did it just because he had been abandoned by his former ally and could not count on any reinforcements from its side. Also, he did not have such a confidence in the French ministry, dominated by the supporters of Austria, as he once had in the earliest ally of Sweden. And no matter what circumstances forced him to do so, it was not him who had withdrawn from the alliance with France. It was France that had abandoned its old rules and had been the first to withdraw from the system which it had ardently supported since 1768 and which it had wanted to maintain since then. Gustav III also made Franc include in the response to Gausсен a statement that it would be neither wise nor prudent on the part of the king to decide to break relations with the courts which had been the only ones to come to his aid not having any prior obligations to him and which had all the time deterred Denmark and had not allowed for the implementation of its hostile intentions. France, on the other hand, even if it wanted to, would not be able to effectively help Sweden. Moreover, the state of its internal affairs was such that it was not clear who was really in charge there. The response handed in to Gausсен also included the expression that the king was prevented from the cooperation with France by the fear that the Austrian influence could cause turning back of the Versailles court from Sweden in the decisive moment of the war and could lead to the situation in which Gustav III would again be at the mercy of Russia. The content of the royal instruction clashed with the views of the Secretary of State who seemed to be a supporter of maintaining the alliance with the court of Versailles regarding it as a selfless friend of Sweden who did not ask for Swedish trade in exchange for its friendship like England, nor Pomerania, like Prussia. Explaining the motives of his actions to Franc, Gustav III wrote to him the following: "France is nothing at the moment. I am not going to be a friend of this crowd of demagogues who have gathered at Versailles and Louis XVI is such a nonentity as a doge of Venice deprived of everything". He confirmed his opinion on the next day, October 14, 1789, when he noted on the message of Secretary of State of September 30: "Mr de Gausсен is a dignified representative of his king who has no common sense. I have disowned the French and France since it became oligarchical and republican. As far as republicans are concerned, I much more prefer the English"⁵⁴.

⁵⁴ See notes of Gustav III on the messages from U.G. Franc of September 26 and 30, 1789, Lovisa, October 13 and 14, 1789, *Bref till Wachtmeister och Franc*, pp. 146–148.

On November 11, 1789 Gustav III received the news about the October incidents in Versailles and Paris. On the same day, he prepared the necessary orders for Ulric Gustaf Franc. He ordered him to assure the Chevalier de Gaussen that he was very worried about what had happened in Paris. The Secretary of State was also to convince the French diplomat that Gustav III was keenly interested in all that concerned the King of France and that if he was not so involved in the war with Russia, he would never leave his old friend to his own fate⁵⁵. At the time of writing the cited note the Swedish monarch, however, could do very little for Louis XVI. After finishing the campaign of 1789 he was returning to Stockholm just to start preparations for military action in the next year.

THE PARIS MISSION IN THE SECOND HALF OF 1789

During the second Russian campaign, Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein not only regularly informed Gustav III of current affairs on the French political scene, but also tried to gain some support for him both, from the court of Versailles and from the Triple Alliance countries. A great ambassador's success was also the fact that France, remaining in the state of deep crisis, decided to meet all financial commitments to the Stockholm court. In early August 1789 Staël von Holstein transferred to Stockholm the sum of 300 thousand *livres* which was the last instalment of French subsidies paid to Gustav III under the previous treaty agreements. In August 1789 the ambassador dealt also with the matter of rectifying false accounts of the Swedish-Russian military operations theatre published in the Parisian press on the initiative of the St. Petersburg court. He remained in the intimate terms with Jacques Mallet du Pan and in the pages of the newspaper edited by him, "Mercure de France", he announced various articles with the anti-Russia content. In the middle of September he also sent to Stockholm previously ordered Mallet du Pan's book about the history of the reign of Catherine II which cost the Swedish treasury three thousand *livres*. At about the same time, Staël von Holstein informed Gustav III that the former French Ambassador to Stockholm, the Marquis of Pons, had been appointed the Ambassador to Madrid and his former position was going to be taken over by Stanislas Marie, Count of Clermont-Tonnerre who should fully satisfy the expectations of the Stockholm court. In September 1789 the Swedish diplomat in Paris also kept conversations with Sir William Eden, a former English envoy to

⁵⁵ See a note of Gustav III on the message from U.G. Franc of October 28, 1789, Borgå, November 11, 1789, *Bref till Wachtmeister och Franc*, p. 151. It is worth mentioning that the king's fears of the fate of France were fully shared by his former friend and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. See U. Scheffer to S. Piper, Ek, November 8, 1789, B. Hennings, *Ulrik Scheffer brev till Sophie Piper*, "Historisk Tidskrift", vol. LXXIX, Stockholm 1959, p. 292.

Madrid, whom he was trying to win for the concept of a Swedish-English alliance. According to Staël, Eden, who was a brother-in-law of Sir Hugh Elliot and a close friend of William Pitt, could play a huge role during the negotiations with the court of London. When in the middle of October Eden moved from Paris to London, the ambassador wrote to Gustav III that via his English friends he would try to obtain information whether Eden had taken some effort to convince the St. James cabinet of the idea of signing a formal treaty with the Stockholm court⁵⁶.

The issue of negotiations with the London court gradually became the main focus of the Swedish diplomat. On November 1, 1789 Staël von Holstein informed the Stockholm court that William Eden had been elevated to the rank of Baron Auckland. Thus, his position in London had been further strengthened. For that reason, Staël took efforts to establish informal contact with him and start secret negotiations on the conditions of the future Swedish-English treaty. At the same time the copies of the letter of Gustav III to the Prince of Condé reached Paris. The letter made a great impression on the French public opinion. In the same message Staël wrote to the king: "A delightful letter of Your Majesty to the Prince of Condé is being discussed here in all the clubs. It is also said that Your Majesty has written a similar letter to the Count of Artois. Aristocrats are very proud of what Your Majesty has done for their leaders". A few days later the Swedish diplomat informed his court of a growing dissatisfaction of Belgium residents and of the fact that the National Constituent Assembly had adopted a decree on taking over land properties belonging to the Catholic Church by the state. However, while the first issue attracted a lot of his interest, he left the second question virtually uncommented. In the subsequent messages Staël wrote that the National Assembly had adopted a resolution on banning deputies from holding ministerial offices. In his opinion, it was a very useful resolution that, in a long run, could lead to weakening intrigues against the government, strengthening the executive power and restoring inner peace in France. However, it was still very far from restoring order in the capital since Louis XVI had rejected the request of the Commune of Paris to dissolve the troops of the Royal Guard. Although Staël had predicted before that the king would be forced to comply with the request, he strongly condemned the actions of troublemakers who used the case of the Royal Guard to incite the people against the court. He was concerned that the government was very unpopular and the clergy, who should be the natural support of the throne and public policy, in defence of lost wealth was inciting the unrest and causing dissatisfaction of the inhabitants of the provinces. At the beginning of December 1789

⁵⁶ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, August 2 (apostille), 13, 27, September 6, 17 and October 15, 1789, RA, Gallica vol. 472; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, p. 111.

Staël's message finally included information that there had been an evidence that some members of the assembly on the night of October 5/6 had encouraged angry crowd to attack the royal guards at Versailles. According to the ambassador, it also proved that no radically change of the situation or calming the moods should be expected in the nearest future in France since omnipresent hatred of everybody for everybody was rather a harbinger of the imminent disaster⁵⁷.

At the turn of November and December 1789 Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein once again returned to the issue of hiring foreign regiments from the French army in the Swedish service. He talked with several members of the government about the matter but did not receive any binding answer from them since the ministers did not know what decisions on the new army organisation the assembly would make. However, the ambassador had some evidence that serious offers had already been made to the Swiss regiments by the Kings of England and Prussia. In that situation he predicted that German soldiers would be more easily induced to the Swedish service. He only feared the fact that they would not want to eat the same food as Swedish soldiers and additional funds would be needed for supplying those troops with food. Gustav III was not alienated at all. He wrote on the cited message that Staël should be ordered to accelerate efforts to finalise the whole thing. On the first days of December Staël von Holstein informed the court of Stockholm that Russia intended to launch an offensive in the Mediterranean Sea, using Turkish troubles in Egypt. The Russians had also suggested that the Order of Malta gained control over Malta and that Russia could protect the Order. According to the ambassador, it was very likely because France had lost all the influence on Malta and the Order expected issuing an edict on the confiscation of its possessions in France by the National Assembly. Since the French had too much trouble on Corsica, Staël feared that Russia would certainly want to take advantage of it. The same message included the information that the matters in Belgium had gone so badly that the Austrians would not manage to control the situation in the country without bloodshed. A few days later, Staël von Holstein wrote to Gustav III that he had sent Carl Gustaf Ehrensvärd in Madrid a letter with information about the projects of Russia in the Mediterranean Sea. The ambassador hoped that Madrid would do everything to prevent the Russians from carrying out those projects. In the same message Staël also returned to the issue of negotiations with

⁵⁷ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, November 1, 5, 12, 19 and December 3, 1789, RA, Gallica vol. 472; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, p. 147, pp. 149–151; A. Söderhjelm, *op. cit.*, p. 150; N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, p. 24. See also A. Soboul, *op. cit.*, pp. 94–96; A. Mathiez, *Rewolucja...*, pp. 118–119; L. Villat, *op. cit.*, pp. 62–64. For information on the situation in Belgium see J. Godechot, *France and the Atlantic Revolution 1770–1799*, London 1971, pp. 60–63; *Historia dyplomacji*, vol. I (*do 1871 r.*), W.M. Chwostow et al. (ed.), Warszawa 1973, p. 428.

the London court. He hoped they would finish successfully, since his intermediary, through whom he was conducting the negotiations with Auckland, had not received an absolute refusal. However, the ambassador was mostly concerned about the matter of the Russian-Turkish war since he was afraid that Turkey, having been recently defeated, would not be willing to conclude a separate peace with the imperial courts. However, he was optimistic and hoped that the Baron von Brentano would manage to persuade the Turks to prepare adequately for the next campaign⁵⁸.

In the message of December 17, 1789 Staël von Holstein returned again to the events in Belgium. He wrote that the Austrian army had had to leave Brussels. He supposed that the Belgian insurgents would attempt to free themselves from Austrian domination, especially that sooner or later Prussia and Holland would decide to intervene in that country. Staël, however, was sure that France would maintain a complete neutrality in the dispute between the emperor and his subjects. The ambassador also noted the rumour that supposedly Auguste, Count of La Marck was playing a role in the Belgian revolution. He admitted that his family actually had a great influence in the country but he thought that he himself was not able to lead such a large undertaking. The Swedish diplomat was much more interested in the reports from St. Petersburg from where Louis Philippe, Count of Ségur, wrote that England and Prussia had suggested a reconciliation with Russia provided that the empress agreed to assign Gdańsk to Prussia and restore old trading privileges in Russian ports to England. Staël, however, did not believe that the reports were true confirming the king in his belief about the benefits of cooperation with the Triple Alliance countries. At the same time, Staël took efforts to obtain a loan for the court of Stockholm. He conducted negotiations with one of the best Geneva banks. However, Swedish bankers' fear of the results of the war fought by Gustav III stood in the way of finalising those negotiations. Still, Staël supposed that he could get a loan of 12 million *livres* provided, however, that the king obtained adequate guarantees from Prussia and England. He also warned his lord that without those guarantees he should not expect a successful final of his actions. In his last message of 1789, Staël von Holstein wrote about the consequences of the

⁵⁸ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, November 26, December 6 (and the apostille to the message) and 13, 1789, RA, Gallica vol. 472. See also a note of Gustav III on the message of November 26, 1789, *ibidem*. It is also worth paying attention to the fact that Staël's hopes for taking actions by the Madrid court against Russia had been absolutely unjustified. As early as on November 12, 1789 Ehrensvärd reported from Madrid that the Catholic King had finally decided to help his French cousin and, in this case, establishing closer relationship between the Spanish court and the imperial courts should be expected. He also wrote that the Spaniards would soon set out to write a formal treaty of alliance with Vienna and St. Petersburg. See C.A. Ehrensvärd to Gustav III, Madrid, November 12, 1789, apostille, RA, Hispanica vol. 31.

detection of the conspiracy of the Marquis of Favras, which was to make it easier for Louis XVI to leave Paris, by La Fayette. The Count of Provence was also involved in the conspiracy. For fear of the consequences of his recklessness, at the seat of the Commune, he read out a speech edited by La Fayette in which he denied links with Favras. According to Staël, a visit of Monsieur in the Commune of Paris outraged the local public opinion and the party called aristocratic found it to be a real scandal. The behaviour of the Count of Provence outraged the aristocrats so much that they did not want to recognise the king's brother as their leader any longer. The ambassador emphasised, however, that despite the aristocrats' attacks the count had gained such a popularity that he had never enjoyed before. According to Staël von Holstein, the stabilisation of the situation in France should not, however, be expected too quickly. The reforms of the National Assembly ran up against strong and determined opposition. Parliaments, which in recent years had played such a great role, were abolished. No old laws, customs or traditions were respected. The members of the assembly wanted to reform everything at one go, forgetting that they should win people over their ideas even if they were good and were implemented for their own sake. According to the ambassador, the higher nobility, a great part of the clergy, members of resolved parliaments and all opponents of the new order were so outraged at the decisions of the assembly that they were not going to obey them at all. They were not going to accept sacrifices that were required from them. Thus, Staël considered that all the dissatisfied would soon join forces and would both, openly and secretly act against reformers doing everything to cause more of their trouble. He also predicted that it would not be too difficult since there had been enormous tension in France for a long time due to which the slightest incident could lead to unpredictable consequences. In his opinion, even eight days could not pass in Paris without the fear of the outbreak of a new revolution. Thus, the ambassador prophesied that if such a revolution ever came, it would probably be very bloody⁵⁹. The last report of Staël von Holstein was not too optimistic. It included hardly any expressions confirming the thesis of the ambassador's acceptance of what was going on before his eyes in France plunged into revolutionary turmoil. The author of the report did not know that proverbial "black clouds" had already started to gather over his head since some people who had appeared in the circle of Gustav III felt that Staël von Holstein should be replaced by a more pro-royal diplomat at the Paris post.

⁵⁹ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, December 17, 24 and 31, 1789, RA, Gallica vol. 472; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 151–152. For information on the conspiracy of the Marquis of Favras see A. Mathiez, *Rewolucja...*, p. 83.

EVERT TAUBE AND HANS AXEL VON FERSEN

One of resolute opponents of Staël von Holstein was Baron Evert Taube. Born on September 8, 1737 in a good noble family, he was the son of a Captain Carl Didrik Taube and Martha Christina Ehrencrona. Being a professional soldier and avowed monarchist, he made meteoric career, especially after the August coup of 1772. Appointed a lieutenant in 1775, the following year he was advanced to the rank of a colonel. In 1782 Taube finally achieved a rank of a major-general. In the 80's he had already been one of the king's close friends. Yet, it was not until 1788 that he started to play a significant political role when he replaced overshadowed Johan Christopher Toll at the side of Gustav III. Gradually, Taube became the king's chief adviser on foreign policy issues. Conservative and royalist beliefs of Taube brought him much closer to Gustav III whom he encouraged to enter into an alliance with Prussia and Poland in order to finally destroy Russia. Taube was also a strong supporter of a conquest of Norway which his king had been dreaming of for a long time. According to many Swedish historians, Evert Taube was a politician in the style of Don Quixote willing to fantasise and speculate. It is worth noting that a similar opinion could be definitely expressed about Gustav III as well. Taube's interest in the French affairs had dated from the time when in the autumn of 1789 he went to Aachen to treat wounds which he had suffered in the war with Russia. Before he left, Gustav III had given him the instructions, saying what follows: "I request you to report all the news that you will be able to collect on the private lives of the King and the Queen of France... if there are any letters against the National Assembly and in favour of the princes, please send them to me". Evert Taube arrived in Aachen on November 30, 1789 and from that moment he maintained the permanent correspondence with the king. He sent him letters about the tense situation in France, the possibility of the outbreak of the counterrevolution and the aversion of the people towards the National Assembly. From the beginning, he also encouraged Gustav III to support Louis XVI in his efforts to restore the old order⁶⁰.

Not having the slightest confidence in Staël von Holstein, Evert Taube was ready to go on a secret mission to Paris to take a close look at everything that was happening in France. On November 30 he wrote to Gustav III: "If Your Majesty comes to the conclusion that it might be useful, I will leave one eye here and I will go with the other. I will only need the plenipotentiary

⁶⁰ See S.G. Svensson, *Taube Evert Vilhelm*, in: *SMoK*, vol. VII, Stockholm 1954, p. 458; A. Söderhjelm, *op. cit.*, pp. 215–217; N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, pp. 21–23. What shows the scale of Taube's ideas is also his project to provide Belgium, protesting against the imperial ruling, with Swedish protection. See E. Taube to Gustav III, Aachen, January 31, 1790 as cited in A. Söderhjelm, *op. cit.*, p. 219.

powers of Your Majesty, the letters of credit from Ruuth for 12–20 thousand francs to be paid in Paris and keeping the deepest secret". While waiting for the king's consent Taube stayed on in Aachen from where on December 18 he again wrote to Gustav III: "The ladies staying here are mad at Staël and his wife. Especially her behaviour is considered to be weird since all the time she advocated against the court personally writing various letters and drawing her poor husband in party conflicts". At about the same time Gustav III prepared a response to Taube's letter of November 30. In a letter of December 22, 1789 the king informed the general that the courier sent via Baron Ruuth would bring him his correspondence together with the letters to the King and the Queen of France which Hans Axel von Fersen was to deliver without Staël's knowledge. Gustav III also made out new instructions for Taube allowing him to departure to Paris. The Parisian mission, however, was to be carried out only if negotiations on signing a treaty of alliance with England failed. Only in that case was Taube to present a demand of Gustav III to the French court. And he intended to demand that France break the alliance with Austria and immediately dismiss Marie Gabriel, Count of Choiseul-Gouffier, whom he considered a diplomat sold to the interests of the imperial courts from Istanbul. Moreover, France was to pay the king extraordinary subsidies and renew the treaty of 1784 with him guaranteeing the payment of ordinary subsidies amounting to 36 million *livres* per year, payable for ten years. In return, Gustav III, after ending the war with Russia, was to send Louis XVI 15 ships and 12 thousand Swedish soldiers. He insisted, however, that the troops were not scattered and that they were under the command of a Swedish officer in the French service⁶¹. Thus, in December 1789 the first projects of a future intervention in French internal affairs appeared at the Stockholm court. Their implementation, however, had to be postponed. The most important political goal of Gustav III was, in fact, ending the war with Russia.

However, the king closely followed developments in France aiming to broaden the circle of his sources. Apart from Taube, Hans Axel, Count von Fersen, was the one who gradually became the most trusted adviser of Gustav III on the French matters. Called "beautiful Fersen" or "great Axel" at the Stockholm court, he turned out to be the greatest counterrevolutionary of all king's diplomats. Fersen came from one of the Swedish most powerful aristocratic families. Born on September 4, 1755 in Stockholm he was the son of Field-Marshal Fredrik Axel, one of the leaders of the "Hats" and Hedwig Catharina, Countess De la Gardie. Brought up in the French spirit he was designated for a military career. After a brief service in the Royal Guard, in 1773 he became a cornet, then a lieutenant in the Småland cavalry regiment. However, he

⁶¹ See E. Taube to Gustav III, Aachen, November 30 and December 18, 1789 as cited in A. Söderhjelm, *op. cit.*, pp. 201, 218; Gustav III to E. Taube, Stockholm, December 22, 1790, RA, Stafsundsarkivet, Evert Taubes Samling, vol. I.

did not turn up at all in his new unit because at the same time he was making a foreign trip in Germany, Italy and France. He returned to the country in 1774 and the following year he was promoted to the rank of a captain and moved to the Finnish regiment of light dragoons. In 1778 he went to France where he joined the service in the Royal Bavière regiment. He was a very handsome man and because of his birth, considerable refinement and exquisite manners he was very well received at the court of Versailles. Almost immediately he fell in love with the queen, Marie Antoinette, who introduced him to a narrow circle of her closest friends. In 1780–1783 Fersen took part in the United States War of Independence, serving under the command of General Jean Baptiste de Rochambeau. During the war he was appointed a colonel in the Swedish army. He was also assigned (in absentia) to the post of a lieutenant-colonel in the parent unit of light dragoons. Fersen, however, did not hurry back to Sweden. After returning from America in the autumn of 1783, he bought the Royal Suédois regiment from Sparre brothers for 100 thousand *livres* (the entire operation was financed by his father), assuming the position of a colonel-owner. Fersen's friend from the times of the American war, Curt von Stedingk, became his deputy (*colonel commandant*) in the newly purchased regiment. At the turn of 1783 and 1784 Hans Axel von Fersen accompanied Gustav III on his grand tour around Italy and France. He returned to Sweden together with the king but in the spring of 1785 he again appeared in France. He maintained a very close relation with the queen. It was even rumoured that would-be Louis XVII, born on March 27, 1785, was Fersen's son. After a short absence (June 1786 – May 1787), Hans Axel von Fersen once again returned to France which he had long considered to be his second homeland. He then entered into a long-term affair with Eleonore Sullivan, an Italian actress with a turbulent past, a life companion of a wealthy Scottish financier, "nabob of Manila", James Quentin Craufurd, who also belonged to the group of Marie Antoinette's friends⁶².

In the era of "a revolt of the privileged" Fersen remained on the side of Louis XVI against the opposition of the parliaments and the liberal aristocracy. He condemned Calonne for disclosing the state of public finances to the public. Summoned by Gustav III in the spring of 1788, Hans Axel von Fersen returned to Sweden along with Curt von Stedingk. He took part in an

⁶² See *Svenska adelns*, vol. II, Stockholm 1926, p. 686; A. Söderhjelm, *Fersen et Marie-Antoinette. Journal intime et correspondance du comte Axel de Fersen*, Paris 1930, pp. 11–110; eadem, *Sverige...*, p. 220; B. Hildebrand, *Fersen Hans Axel von*, in: *SBL*, vol. XV, Stockholm 1956, pp. 708–715; H.A. Barton, *Count Hans Axel von Fersen. Aristocrat in an Age of Revolution*, Boston 1975, p. 38 and fol.; A. Carlsson, E. Elstob, *Introduction*, in: A. v. Fersen, *Rescue the Queen. A Diary of the French Revolution 1789–1793* [further on: *Rescue the Queen*], A. Carlsson, E. Elstob (eds), London 1971, pp. 3–6; *The Letters of Marie Antoinette, Fersen and Barnave*, O.G. Heidenstam (ed.), London 1926, pp. 1–26.

unsuccessful Russian campaign in 1788. Yet, at the beginning of November he returned to Paris where he closely followed the changes taking place on the French political scene. As an enemy of the king's despotism, he initially approvingly referred to the liberalisation of the relations in France. He welcomed the decision of doubling the representation of the third estate. Nonetheless, over time he became more and more critical. He was especially terrified at the prospect of crowd tyranny and limitations of the current role of the nobility in the life of state and society. Fersen became a staunch enemy of the revolution when, staying in Valenciennes where his regiment was stationing, he received news of the fall of the Bastille. In the summer of 1789 he wrote in the subsequent letters to his father about an acute crisis which France had plunged into the breaking of all social ties, the loss of discipline in the army and the utter chaos in the country. In his opinion, all that was a result of the spread of the French Enlightenment philosophy and uncritical imitation of the English patterns. He was also concerned to notice the fact that more and more French people accepted the belief that all men were created equal, which had been propagated for so long by philosophers. The biggest shock for Fersen, however, was the events of October 1789 as he was staying at Versailles on October 5 and the next day accompanied the royal family on their journey to Paris. Having witnessed the humiliation of the French royal couple, the proud aristocrat immediately definitively rid himself of any liberal sentiments and became a strong conservative. Having settled permanently in Paris in the autumn of 1789, Hans Axel von Fersen also tightened his former relation with Marie Antoinette becoming her trusted confidant and adviser on political issues. At the same time, Gustav III also paid greater attention to him⁶³.

Interestingly, the relation of the King of Sweden and Fersen was not going well from the beginning. Being the son of a leader of the noble opposition and the aristocratic liberal, Hans Axel von Fersen treated Gustav III with deep reserve. The reserve transformed into an open resentment when the count found out about the arrest of his father during the February coup of 1789 whereas Gustav III found Fersen's haughtiness and cool distance which he kept in relation to his imminent surroundings offensive. He also resented the fact that Fersen preferred to stay in France rather than serve in the Swedish army. The king was also disappointed at Fersen's attitude during the military campaign of 1788. Thus, Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein's

⁶³ See A. Söderhjelm, *Fersen...*, pp. 110–138; eadem, *Sverige...*, pp. 222–223; H.A. Barton, *op. cit.*, pp. 76–77, 83; R.M. Klinckowström, *Introduction*, in: *Le comte de Fersen et la cour de France. Extraits des papiers du grand maréchal de Suède, comte Jean Axel de Fersen*, R.M. Klinckowström (ed.), vol. I, Paris 1877, pp. XLVII–XLVIII [further on: *Fersen et la cour de France*]; A. Carlsson, E. Elstob, *op. cit.*, p. 6; H.A. v. Fersen to F.A. v. Fersen, Valenciennes, July 22, August 15 and September 3, 1789, *Rescue the Queen*, pp. 19–21.

fears expressed in a message of July 12, 1789 were completely unfounded. Informing Gustav III of the ideas of Marie Antoinette, who the day after the dismissal of Necker expressed the hope that the Count von Fersen would become the new Swedish Ambassador to France, Staël von Holstein quite hysterically asked the king to leave him at his current position. The Swedish ruler was far from promoting Fersen who had fallen into his disfavour once again. On July 28, 1789 Gustav III wrote to Gustaf Ulric Franc that many officers of the Royal Suédois regiment wanted to join the Swedish army and fight against the Russians. The commander of the regiment, Hans Axel von Fersen, however, refused to grant them leave and thus they had to hand in resignation and quit the service. Consequently, the king ordered Franc to write to Staël asking him to persuade Fersen telling him that if he did not intend to ask for a transfer to the Swedish service, he should not at least disturb his countrymen if they still considered themselves Swedes. At the same time, Gustav III ordered Staël to try to obtain a dismissal of Fersen from the French service. However, the ambassador believed from the beginning that the task was extremely difficult and he did not promise success. In that situation, the king gave up efforts to lead to Fersen's dismissal and decided to keep him in Paris as his extra source. When Evert Taube appeared in Aachen, Gustav III also changed his views on the role that Hans Axel von Fersen was playing in France. In the autumn of 1789 the King of Sweden began to see threat to all the thrones from the French Revolution. He then began to consider the possibility of organising monarchical crusade against revolutionary France. Thinking about restoration of the old order, the king rightly assumed that in achieving that goal a friend of Marie Antoinette, Hans Axel von Fersen, would be more useful than Necker's son-in-law, Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein. Therefore, Evert Taube, who was an old Fersen's friend, met him in Aachen at the beginning of January 1790. The envoy of Gustav III was very pleased with the meeting, about which he informed the king in his letter of January 7: "Great Axel has come from Valenciennes to see me. The scenes that took place before his eyes in France taught him a good lesson and now bright future can be prognosticated for him. He can personally experience terrible disasters of the people's governance... since of all possible ways of the governance, anarchy is the most terrible, the most tyrannical and always the most devastating for all countries". In the same letter Taube wrote what follows: "I am really very pleased with Great Axel and I believe that he is a good and faithful servant of Your Majesty; I also dare vouch for his dedication, Your Majesty..."⁶⁴. After the meeting in Aachen

⁶⁴ See A. Söderhjelm, *Fersen...*, pp. 138–141; eadem, *Sverige...*, pp. 197–198, 220–221; H.A. Barton, *op. cit.*, pp. 79, 84–85; E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, July 12 and August 30, 1789, RA, Gallica vol. 472; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 107–108; Gustav III to U.G. Franc, Kymmenegård, July 28/29, 1789, *Bref till Wachtmeister och Franc*, p. 106;

the ice was broken and thanks to Taube's recommendation, Hans Axel von Fersen soon started regular correspondence with Gustav III.

In the letter to the king of January 7, 1790 Fersen also suggested organising a departure of Louis XVI from Paris. The preparation for the escape of the royal family would become the main aim of all his endeavours in the future. What was the most important to him, Marie Antoinette, in contrast to Louis XVI, approved of the idea of emigration from the very beginning. Gustav III also liked Fersen's project and he very quickly took to his new diplomat. It was still easier as Hans Axel von Fersen's beliefs were close to the Swedish king's heart. He condemned actions of the National Constituent Assembly, expressed satisfaction with the failures of the old liberal opposition, pitied the fate of the Marquis of Favras and was one of the most avowed royalist at the French court. At the beginning of February 1790 Fersen received from Gustav III credentials authorising him at the position of a new Ambassador of France in place of Staël von Holstein. That nomination, however, was secret and conditional. Fersen could only use the credentials, if the king's departure from Paris succeeded. Since the service in the Royal Suédois regiment could be a major obstacle to achieving his diplomatic tasks, on March 24, 1790 Fersen was granted a permanent leave and definitely left his unit. From then on he focused on political actions, gradually becoming one of the most trusted advisers of the French royal couple. From the very beginning, he felt great animosity to Necker whom he regarded as the cause of all evil. He also remained in a very bad relation with Staël von Holstein. At the same time, he encouraged Marie Antoinette to enter negotiations with one of the leaders of the National Assembly, the Count of Mirabeau. He also maintained close relation with the Count of Saint-Priest, considered to be the most royalist of all the ministers of Louis XVI. All that let Fersen win more and more favour of Gustav III. At the beginning of April 1790 Taube took an attempt to persuade the king to officially appoint the count as the Ambassador to Paris in place of Staël von Holstein. Although Gustav III did not agree to that suggestion, the position of the present ambassador at the French court seemed seriously jeopardised as the opponents of revolutionary France were gaining greater influence at the court of Stockholm. And among those reluctant to the revolution were all, with no exception, closest associates of the king at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: the Secretary of State, Ulric Gustaf Franc, the Secretary of the Presidential Office, Pehr Olof von Asp and his first deputy, Baron Schering Rosenhane⁶⁵.

B. Hildebrand, *op. cit.*, p. 716; E. Taube to Gustav III, Aachen, January 7, 1790 as cited in A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige...*, pp. 223–224.

⁶⁵ See A. Söderhjelm, *Fersen et...*, pp. 143–150; H.A. Barton, *op. cit.*, pp. 86–89, 94–95; H.A. v. Fersen to F.A. v. Fersen, Paris, February 1, 1790, *Rescue the Queen*, p. 21; H.A. v. Fersen to E. Taube, Paris, February 4 and 7, 1790, RA, Stafsundsarkivet, Evert Taubes Samling,

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ACCOUNT (JANUARY-JULY 1790)

Meanwhile, Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein sent further reports to Stockholm from his post. On January 7, 1790 he wrote about the prospects for French foreign policy. To his mind, public opinion demanded that the king break the alliance with Austria and conclude the alliance with Turkey, Prussia and Sweden. However, the government did not intend to succumb to that pressure and nothing indicated that France would help Gustav III since the French ministry, preoccupied with internal problems, was slowly forgetting about their former position on the international scene. Besides, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Armand Marc, Count of Montmorin, was an ardent supporter of rapprochement with the imperial courts, like Saint-Priest, who Staël considered a very dangerous opponent of Sweden. The Count of Ségur, a strong supporter of the alliance with Austria, was equally reluctant to the Stockholm court. He did everything to develop a closer Russian-French relation. A few days later Staël reported the rumours that in the spring military actions might take place in England and Prussia in defence of Turkey. However, he was convinced that France would remain totally passive in the face of such a conflict since the participation in any external war could end in its total disaster. In the same message, Staël informed the king of implementing an edict of the National Assembly establishing a new administrative division in France (provinces were to be replaced by departments). He was sure that the execution of the edict would cause serious trouble and discontent of the people. Staël von Holstein's January messages also included reports of his efforts to obtain a loan for the court of Stockholm (apart from negotiations in Geneva he had also started talks with one of Parisian bankers) and to hire German and Swiss troops in the Swedish service (here he faced great difficulties because the French still wanted to keep foreign regiments in their service). The ambassador also submitted to Montmorin an official protest against the treatment of the Count of Choiseul-Gouffier in Istanbul. He continued confidential negotiations in London via his emissary, named Ambert. Giving Gustav III an account of it, he wrote that Pitt's cabinet would like to support both, Sweden and Turkey but was afraid not to lead to an open breaking with imperial courts. In that situation, Staël asked the king for further orders since he wondered whether he should conduct further informal talks in London or withdraw from the whole thing. In the view of the wide spreading rumours about a possible departure of Louis XVI

from the capital, the ambassador asked the ruler of Sweden what he should do if the royal family left Paris. He also enquired what to do in case the king was forcibly detained in his capital. At the same time information on the official dismissal of the current French Ambassador to the Swedish capital reached Stockholm. Therefore, Gustav III wrote to Ulric Gustaf Franc: "the Baron of Staël should be instructed that the successor to the Marquis of Pons should be a calm man at the right age and, above all, he should be neither a philosopher nor an elegant". For the time being, however, France was not thinking about appointing a new ambassador and a *chargé d'affaires*, Chevalier Jean de Gaussen, staying in Stockholm for a long time, became a temporary successor to the marquis⁶⁶.

Meanwhile, the attention of French public opinion was drawn to the case of the conspiracy of the Marquis of Favras. La Fayette told Louis XVI that he should definitely dissociate from the conspirators and ultimately deprive the aristocrats of the hope of restoring the old order. On February 4, 1790 the obedient king went to the National Assembly where he gave the speech written by Necker and inspired by La Fayette. He declared in it that he and the queen had accepted the new state of affairs without reservations and called all the French to follow his example⁶⁷. In relation to that event, on February 7, Staël von Holstein wrote that the aristocrats felt abandoned by the king who had given up their cause. On the other hand, however, the king had gained a great recognition of the wider public and the cold blood which he had manifested in the assembly aroused the enthusiasm of the house. Describing the contemporary situation in France, the ambassador claimed that for some time new internal problems had been arising in the country. The king and some deputies had been doing their best to calm the situation down but they had been facing strong resistance of the nobility and the clergy. Staël, however, was optimistic and predicted that new problems would force the king to be in favour of the rightly thinking part of the assembly. In his opinion, the king should not try to stop the revolution but he should head it, hoping that he could lead it. The weakness of the available resources would force him to seek the support of the people. As always, Staël advocated strengthening the executive power. He predicted, however, some difficulties because the democrats feared that one day the government force could be used against them. The ministry seemed stable to the Swedish diplomat while the assembly was divided and torn by inner contradictions. According to

⁶⁶ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, January 7, 10, 17, 24 and 31, 1789, RA, Gallica vol. 473; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 153–154. See also N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, pp. 24–25. An extract from the letter of Gustav III to U.G. Franc as cited in A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige...*, pp. 112–113. For more information on the administrative reform in France see A. Soboul, *op. cit.*, pp. 103–104; A. Mathiez, *Rewolucja...*, pp. 107–109; L. Villat, *op. cit.*, pp. 68–71.

⁶⁷ See A. Mathiez, *Rewolucja...*, pp. 83–84.

Staël, Monsieur had plotted an intrigue with the Count of Mirabeau to enter the Council and make himself the head of the popular party. However, he was gently pushed aside, as the king and the queen fully trusted Necker. Besides, such a solution was opposed by La Fayette who was one of the most influential people in France as a commander of 30 thousand armed people staying in the city where the National Assembly had its meetings and as a man whom the popular party, including the assembly, totally trusted. Staël seemed to be convinced that if there was an alliance between La Fayette and Necker, it would be possible to calm the internal situation in France, especially due to the fact that the influence of the aristocratic party in the National Assembly was weakening. The ambassador also regretted that the government had failed to secure a stable majority in the assembly. He was convinced that the future of France would depend on how the competence of the executive powers would be defined. Returning to the administrative reform, he wrote that a division into departments and municipalities might have been good but if the state was to function normally, the law would have to be respected and taxes would have to be paid. For the time being, the financial condition was worsening every day. And although Necker had already made numerous proposals on improving the public finances, none had even been considered by the assembly and the king did not have any means to implement the ideas of his minister. Thus, Staël was convinced that the administrative reform would lead to inevitable transformation of France into a federal republic preventing its active participation in the events on the international scene. In reference to the last issue, the ambassador informed Gustav III that Prussia and Poland had taken thorough preparations for the war against Austria. He also wrote about the serious illness of Emperor Joseph II. He predicted that if the French-English war broke out, France would inevitably lose its colonies which were one of the principal sources of its wealth. He also warned the king that Catherine II had made extensive preparations for a future campaign, increasing her fleet significantly. He also noted rumours that the commander of the Russian fleet, Karl Heinrich, Prince von Nassau-Siegen had promised to visit Gustav III in Stockholm⁶⁸.

In his subsequent messages, Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein wrote that no decisions had been made in France on the strengthening the executive power and because the financial situation was very bad, next, terrible coup in the country should be expected very soon. He also informed the king about a long conversation he had had with James Quentin Craufurd. According to Staël, his interlocutor was very positively perceived in London as a good friend of William Pitt. During that conversation the ambassador hinted that

⁶⁸ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, February 7, 1790, RA, Gallica vol. 473; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 154–157.

it should be in the natural English interest to support Sweden in its war against Russia and the best support for the Stockholm court would be granting sufficiently high subsidies by the London office. Craufurd replied that the British prime minister intended to give the Swedes every assistance, including even the use of force, if necessary. He also promised to write a letter to Pitt and his other friends on that matter. He finished with the words that Robert Liston, the English minister in Stockholm, was a man of a great talent and proven integrity. He was also fully trusted by his government which carried out almost everything that he proposed. Since Liston was supposed to be a close friend of both, Craufurd and Sir Hugh Elliot, which would significantly increase his influence in London, Staël was advised that further negotiations on English help for Sweden should be conducted via the court of St. James in Stockholm. On the first days of March 1790 the Swedish diplomat reported from Paris that his efforts to obtain a loan in one of the local banks had ended in failure. He had even offered a financier with whom he had been conducting talks the Order of the North Star but, nevertheless, all his efforts had turned out to be fruitless. At the same time the news of the death of Emperor Joseph II and his brother's, Leopold II's, accession to the throne reached Paris. Staël predicted that the change on the imperial throne would entail reshuffle in the international arena. Catherine II would certainly not intend to give up the alliance with Austria but she would be probably willing to listen to the proposals from the other powers. According to the ambassador, what seemed more real in the new situation was the possibility of the entering of the Triple Alliance countries and Russia into negotiations. After long efforts Staël also managed to lead a case of a dispute between the Baron von Brentano and the Count of Choiseul-Gouffier, representing France interests in Istanbul, to a happy ending. Despite resistance from Montmorin, Louis XVI awarded the Order of Saint Louis to Georg Josef von Brentano because that was a compensation demanded by Gustav III for his diplomat. Writing about the financial problems of France Staël seemed to doubt in the successful result of the efforts undertaken by his father-in-law. Nonetheless, he sent a message to Stockholm that Necker had prepared a new plan to improve the public finances. According to his assurances, all French troubles were going to finish on January 1, 1791 provided, however, that all his projects were carried out. Necker also promised to balance the budget. Yet, the Swedish ambassador approached the promises with a great reserve and he did not attach much importance to them. It is also worth noting that at about the same time, on March 2, 1790, Jean de Gaussen wrote to his Minister of Foreign Affairs that he had turned to the Swedish government with an official intervention on the content of the articles published in Stockholm newspapers since according to the French *chargé d'affaires*,

Swedish newspapers had been for a long time filled with news and anecdotes as false as unpleasant for all good Frenchmen. And although Gaussen did not expect too much from his intervention, he expressed satisfaction with the fact that he had managed to draw the Swedish government's attention to all the abuses of journalists that he knew about. Needless to say, that insufficiency of measures taken by the representative of France in Stockholm resulted from a progressive cooling in the Swedish-French relations⁶⁹.

On March 18, 1790 Staël wrote to Gustav III that, in his opinion, nothing was more uncertain and more problematic than the current situation in France. The party dominating in the assembly would like to lead to an instant disappearance of the old system without looking to any obstacles and the public opposition. The anti-constitutional party was trying by all means to maintain the state of tension and to exacerbate current difficulties. All the people were uniting in evil. Aristocrats were flattering themselves that they would be able to bring a counterrevolution. They wanted to denigrate the assembly in the eyes of the people. Staël assumed, however, that they would sooner become victims of their own policies rather than achieve the intended goal. In the following messages, the ambassador reported another increase of tension in Brussels where the famous lawyer and Belgian politician, Hendrik van der Noot, was inciting people to anti-Austrian disturbances despite the fact that the new emperor had devaluated the policy of his dead brother. He also mentioned French public opinion's liking for Belgian insurgents and its hatred towards the Austrians. Informing Gustav III of the recovery of Necker, who had been ill for a long time, he also wrote about a large outraged minds in Paris. In his opinion, the assembly should strive after the strengthening of the executive power as soon as possible. Only then it could, in fact, be hoped that the situation in France would gradually calm down. For the time being, however, that did not seem to be the case since the aristocrats were thinking only of multiplying trouble and revenge which unnecessarily prolonged misfortune of the country. Referring to the situation in the international arena, Staël von Holstein informed Gustav III that Craufurd had received responses to his letters sent to England. It resulted from them that the London court would try to keep the peace as long as possible but would not hesitate to strongly support Sweden if the need arose. The ambassador fully confirmed that opinion. In a private letter to Gustav III written on April 12, 1790 Staël tried to win his royal correspondent over the approval of the new order in France. He admitted that the country was experiencing huge problems and hastily introduced

⁶⁹ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, February 11 and 21, March 2, 4 and 11, 1790, RA, Gallica vol. 473; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 157–158; N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, p. 24; J. de Gaussen to A.M. de Montmorin, Stockholm, March 2, 1790 as cited in A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige...*, pp. 185–186.

reforms were not without numerous shortcomings and might lead to further outbreaks of a social discontent but he saw no alternative to the rule of the National Assembly. He believed that the counterrevolution was impossible to be carrying out and predicted the defeat of the aristocrats in case they decided to try to restore the *ancien régime* by force. On April 15, 1790 he wrote in turn that Paris was looking forward to the steps taken by the new Austrian monarch towards Prussia and Poland. The Swedish diplomat predicted, however, that France, struggling with its own problems, would not be able to take part in the expected conflict. He was also sure that, if the Austrians demanded more reinforcements, the French court would not fulfil its treaty obligations. If, however, the people became familiar with the Austrian request, they would do everything they could to force the court to break off the unpopular and unfavourable for France alliance. In his last April report, Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein wrote about the publication of the content of secret paragraphs of the Swedish-French treaty in so-called "Red Book" by Montmorin. The ambassador handed in a protest on the matter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs who replied, however, that in the current situation nothing could be hidden from the public opinion. The outrage of the Swedish diplomat resulted from the fact that the "Red Book" definitely overstated the amount of subsidies paid by France to the Stockholm court. Staël supposed that it had been done to hide the sums sent to Vienna from the public opinion. Meanwhile, the new Austria ruler took decisive actions in Berlin. They aimed to persuade Prussia to give up its hostile plans towards Austria. Actions of the Austrian diplomacy in Berlin triggered the conviction of French public opinion that both, Sweden and Poland would be sacrificed by the Prussian court if only there was hope to gain any benefits of the current political crisis. Staël von Holstein was far from sharing that conviction as he considered suspicions attached to Prussia to be highly unfair. In the same report, the ambassador argued that the machinations of the two fighting parties could bring about a new disaster to France. Indeed, it was said that a plan had been hatched to murder the commander of the local garrison, François Claude, Marquis of Bouillé in Metz. It was also rumoured that the king's guards, dismissed from the service and being present in Paris in large numbers, were planning to abduct Louis XVI from his capital. According to Staël, one thing that was certain was bitterness and anger growing each day in a truly terrifying manner and giving cause for concern and fear before the arrival of the most turbulent events⁷⁰.

⁷⁰ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, March 18, 21 and 28, April 4, 15 and 25, 1790, RA, Gallica vol. 473; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 159–161; E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, April 12, 1790, a private letter as cited in L. Leouzon Le Duc, *Introduction*, in: *ibidem*, pp. XXIII–XXIV. See also A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige...*, pp. 210–211. What seems to be the most interesting is the fact that Gustav III did not believe in aristocrats' weakness and did not accept

Accidents in Brussels had been raising serious concern of the Stockholm court for a long time. Gustav III was mostly afraid of spreading of the revolution to the countries neighbouring with France. On April 23, 1790 Ulric Gustaf Franc informed the ambassador about the reluctance of the Swedish government towards everything that had happened in Flanders. He wrote about the worrying alliance of the democrats with the House of Arenberg (which was headed by Auguste, Count of La Marck) which had allied with them just to destroy the old laws and order and take power in the country. The French revolutionaries were also criticised. According to the Secretary of State, La Fayette and his supporters had immediately allied with the Belgian rebels in the name of the same principle of fanaticism that had once made Cromwell put forward a demand towards the Dutch Estates-General to definitely remove the House of Orange from power in the Republic. Having expressed his opinion on the events taking place in Belgium, Franc gave Staël instruction to follow those events with proper attention and prepare regular reports on the actions of the Flemish rebels and French demagogues. He was also expected to take a very careful look at all contacts of the Flemish Estates with the French National Assembly. Meanwhile, Staël von Holstein send to Stockholm the next report on the events taking place on the French political scene. On May 6, 1790 he wrote that La Fayette had given the king a memorandum on the organisation of the executive power and committed himself to make efforts to strengthen it. According to Staël, the marquis primarily wanted to reinforce his own position at court and in the assembly. He considered the attitude of Necker and Montmorin, who strongly opposed entrance of La Fayette to the ministry, to be the greatest obstacle in carrying out his plans. Unable to reach a ministerial position, La Fayette wanted to introduce his man to the government who could replace Necker in the Council. Staël, however, was convinced that the personnel changes in the government would occur only with the expiration of the term of the National Assembly which was not before than on October 1, 1791. According to the ambassador, La Fayette would like to see, above all, Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, Marie Gabriel, Count of Choiseul-Gouffier and Louis Philippe, Count of Ségur in the future government. Staël believed that La Fayette could achieve success and contribute to stabilising the situation in France provided, however, that his influence in the assembly was strong enough to lead to the strengthening of the executive power and the support for his actions from the soldiers and National Guards was so firm that it

the support of the wide group of French society for the revolution. In the letter written on May 21, 1790 to Evert Taube, he was wondering if the Marquis of Bouillé could launch the military coup for the benefit of the king. He was only worried if Louis XVI had enough courage to support general's activity. See Gustav III to E. Taube, Svenskund, May 21, 1790, RA, Stafundsarkivet, Evert Taubes Samling, vol. I.

would allow him to control Paris and the provinces. On May 13 Staël von Holstein wrote, in turn, that England was arming 40 liners which heralded the imminent war with Spain. English reinforcement caused the concern in France which had the old *pacte de famille* with Spain. According to the Swedish ambassador, the internal situation in the country did not allow the government to even think of participating in a war. What seemed the most interesting in that account was Staël's speculations on the benefits that Sweden could gain due to the Spanish-English conflict. He also clearly encouraged Gustav III to be in favour of the court in London. In his opinion, England should then cede a part of the conquered territories, which due to their policies and customs could not be kept permanently in its hands, to their friends⁷¹.

In his subsequent messages, Staël von Holstein informed Gustav III about the works of the National Assembly which was discussing a very important constitutional issue, namely the right to decide on war and peace. It turned out that the ambassador was a supporter of restricting king's prerogatives in that regard. He wrote that it could be assumed that a rational view would prevail in the assembly which would allow the king to develop foreign policy independently with the reservation of the people representation's right of confirming declarations of war and concluding peace treaties. Reporting the debates on the drawing up a Civil Constitution of the Clergy, Staël, in turn, expressed the opinion that due to the considerable animosity of the French society towards the clergy the intention revealed by the deputies to completely destroy the latter one had not led to such a significant ferment as it might have been expected earlier. Referring to the events in Belgium, he wrote that although the uprising had been caused by awkward actions of Emperor Joseph II, the blame for the current events was put on Prussia and Holland which were doing everything to prevent its ending. It was in their interest to stop the growth of Austrian power and pile all possible obstacles against the emperor. As for the efforts of the Flemish patriots, who attempted to ally with France, they had failed to make bigger impression here since the National Assembly sent away their letter to the king "and His Majesty considered it the most appropriate not to respond at all". At the beginning

⁷¹ See U.G. Franc to E.M. Staël v. Holstein, Stockholm, April 23, 1790, RA, Huvudarkivet, Kabinettet/UD, B1B, vol. 129; E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, May 6 and 13, 1790, RA, Gallica vol. 473; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 161–162. For more information on the events in Belgium see E. Rostworowski, *Historia powszechna. Wiek XVIII*, Warszawa 1977, pp. 872–875. For the issue of the origins of the English-Spanish conflict and war preparations started in London see J. Ehrman, *The Younger Pitt. The Years of Acclaim*, London 1969, pp. 554–561; K. Feiling, *A History of England. From the coming of the English to 1918*, London 1966, p. 737; M. Żywczyński, *op. cit.*, p. 77; *Historia dyplomacji*, p. 419.

of June 1790 Staël von Holstein informed his court of finalising negotiations with the banker, Berard. He had managed to acquire a loan of 300 thousand *écus* or 900 thousand *livres* from him. He wrote on that occasion that the general lack of money in France and favourable conditions for capital investment in the country made it significantly more difficult to find people willing to lend money to foreign customers. He promised, however, that he would not be discouraged by those difficulties and just double his efforts to get yet another loan for Gustav III. The question of the Anglo-Spanish conflict was also arousing considerable interest of the Swedish diplomat at that time. In his opinion, neither the nation nor its representatives intended to respect the *pacte de famille* with Spain and although Montmorin was postponing the moment of informing the assembly of the Spanish demands requiring help in the war against England, Staël predicted that the deputies' decision would certainly not be the one that the government would wish for. He was sure that the assembly would seek to break off the pact with Spain and replace it with the pact of a purely defensive character. He justified that peace policy of France stating that it was not able to conduct any war. With a growing concern the ambassador, however, watched the internal developments in France. On June 17 he wrote that for the time being the capital was calm but new violent events could be expected at any time. There were widespread fears before the feast of July 14 when a lot of visitors from all over France were going to come to Paris, especially in the situation in which the law was powerless and no authority was respected. The situation seemed to be even more dangerous as each day the French army became increasingly undisciplined and very few regiments remained faithful to soldier's duty. Staël was also indignant at the increasing number of blasphemous letters, libels and calumnies whose authors remained completely unpunished. A week later he informed the Stockholm court in a similarly pessimistic note that in his opinion: "It is difficult or impossible to predict what the result of a huge revolution that has been conducted over the last few months in France will be. But one thing seems certain. The happy ending should not be expected"⁷².

⁷² See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, May 16, 27 and June 6, 17 and 24 1790, RA, Gallica vol. 473; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 163–164. See also A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige...*, pp. 210–211; N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, pp. 24–25. It is worth mentioning that due to the escalation of the English-Spanish conflict, a heated debate took place in the National Assembly on French foreign policy. On May 24, 1790, at the request of the Count of Mirabeau a compromise resolution was adopted that the National Assembly might declare a war and make peace but only at the request of the king. A direct consequence of the discussions, however, was the establishment of the Standing Diplomatic Committee of the National Assembly, headed by Honoré Gabriel, Count of Mirabeau. In this way, the National Constituent Assembly gained control (for the time being only formally) over the official foreign policy of the state. See *Historia dyplomacji*, p. 419.

At the turn of June and July 1790 messages of Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein were dominated by the issues relating to the upcoming anniversary of the storming of the Bastille. On June 27 he wrote that Paris was eagerly awaiting July 14 and signs were that terrible things would happen there. The French government also seemed to be greatly concerned about what could happen. Staël informed his court that the issue of the *pacte de famille* with Spain would be presented by Montmorin only after the celebration of the Paris insurrection anniversary because he did not want to deepen agitation prevailing in the capital by discussing such an important issue in the assembly. On July 4, 1790 the ambassador wrote, in turn, that the Duke of Orléans notified from London about his wish to go back to Paris for the celebration of the revolution anniversary. The king said that in the current situation it would be better if he stayed in England. It was, however, commonly believed in the capital that despite the unwillingness of Louis XVI the duke would anyway return to France. According to Staël, the duke had retained enough influence on the lower classes that he could be dangerous on July 14. The ambassador did not, however, believe in his return, writing that “the Duke of Orléans has given so much evidence that he prefers to act secretly that it can be hardly supposed that he can find enough courage to expose himself to the real danger”. Thus, Staël von Holstein clearly underestimated the Duke of Orléans. The message of July 11, in which he expressed the view that the enthusiasm had never been so immense as at that moment when Paris was preparing for the celebration of the revolution anniversary, also included information about the return of the duke to the capital. Reporting the actions of the king's cousin, who had been enthusiastically received in the National Assembly, Staël also expressed the assumption that if the Duke of Orléans could win the favour of the people, La Fayette, his antagonist, would have a tough nut to crack. The ambassador, who had never liked the duke, feared that his arrival could lead to the riot in the capital. On that occasion, he called the duke the most common man capable of any crime. On July 15, 1790 Staël von Holstein finally sent Gustav III the account of the celebration of the revolution feast. To his mind, that was the unusual show. It was attended by 300 thousand people, including 14 thousand deputies from all French cities. The king was sitting on the throne and the National Assembly gathered around him. Nothing more magnificent could have been imagined. During the ceremony commemorating the day of the rebellion against the king, overthrowing his hereditary and much-needed power, the people, the city delegates, the National Assembly, they all were attached to their monarch. Even the queen was unbelievably enthusiastically welcomed. All the soldiers left their banners to gather around the throne. Remaining under the undoubted impression of that solemn and magnificent ceremony,

the ambassador very accurately interpreted the sense of all the manifestations since the same message included the statement that “all the people who today shouted ‘Long live the King!’ will do anything tomorrow to prevent him from getting new entitlements strengthening his power. They would rather see the king as a passive observer of the events than acknowledge him as an integral part of the future constitution”. Not without certain satisfaction Staël von Holstein noted, however, that the return of the Duke of Orléans had not done the slightest impression on anyone and had not diminished the enthusiasm of the crowds for the king⁷³. Yet, before Gustav III had the opportunity to familiarise himself with the message, events that had taken place in Finland had greatly influenced the future Swedish-French relations.

THE CAMPAIGN OF 1790 AND THE PEACE WITH RUSSIA

Like in previous years, the operations undertaken on land during the campaign of 1790 tended to be rather a demonstration of arms than a regular warfare. Started back in March the Swedish-Russian fights stepped up after the arrival of Gustav III in Finland at the beginning of April. Later the same month, Gustaf Mauritz Armfelt captured the city of Kärnäkoski, the key to the Russian Finland. On April 29 Gustav III defeated the corps of General Fyodor Denisov at Vålkiala. However, the Russian counteroffensive soon forced the king to withdraw behind the border river of Kymmene. On June 4 Armfelt victoriously drove back the Russian military attack on Kärnäkoski and Pardakoski. Russia lost about 700 soldiers in the battle while the Swedes lost approximately 300 people. It was the biggest victory achieved by the Swedish army throughout the war with Russia. It did not, however, have any great strategic significance as the Swedish attempts to capture the strongholds of Fredrikshamn, Vyborg and Nyslott ended in failure. Thus, Gustav III could only hope to conclude favourable, or “only” honourable, peace with the empress if he gained a significant victory at sea. The Swedes very carefully prepared their navy to the campaign of 1790. Initially, however, there were no indications that the navy would gain victory in the confrontation with the equally well-prepared Russian navy since the attempt to destroy the Russian squadron stationing in Revel made on May 13, 1790 by the battleships of Charles, Prince of Sweden, ended up in failure. The similar failure was suffered by the skerry fleet commanded by Gustav III which on May 15 and 20 tried to capture the stronghold of Fredrikshamn. The attempts to attack St. Petersburg concentrically (with the use of both types of the ships) did not

⁷³ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, June 27 and July 1, 4, 11 and 15, 1790, RA, Gallica vol. 473 and 474; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 164–167. See also A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige...*, pp. 210–211. For more information on the events associated with the celebration of the revolution anniversary see A. Mathiez, *Rewolucja...*, p. 89; L. Villat, *op. cit.*, pp. 96–98.

bring the Swedes any success. On June 1–4 the linear fleet suffered a tactical defeat in a clash with the squadrons of Admirals Alexander von Kruse and Vasili Y. Chichagov near Krasnaya Gorka.

The consequence of that defeat was imposing the blockade of the whole Swedish fleet (both line and rowing ships) by the Russians in the Gulf of Vyborg on June 6. The beginning of July, however, brought a radical change in the situation. On July 3, 1790 a daring attack of the Swedish fleet broke the Russian blockade. The line ships commanded by Charles, Duke of Södermanland, losing about one third of his forces during the operation, eventually took refuge in Sveaborg. At the same time, the skerry fleet under the personal command of Gustav III, who also suffered significant losses while breaking the Russian blockade, took refuge in the Svensksund waters. Attacked there on July 9, the anniversary of the coronation of Catherine II, by the Russian rowing fleet of the Admiral Karl von Nassau-Siegen, the Swedes unexpectedly won an overwhelming victory. The overconfidence of the Russian commander and errors in recognising and commanding during the battle led to Russian defeat which during the retreat turned into a complete rout of the coastal fleet⁷⁴.

The victory at Svensksund opened the track to the start of the Swedish-Russian peace negotiations. In May 1790 Gustav III very much welcomed the Russian peace offer presented to him by Catherine II via Otto Heinrich (Osip) von Igelström. Before the battle of Svensksund, actually, he had been willing to sign a peace treaty provided, however, that the Russians gave up the points concerning the amnesty for the participants of the confederation of Anjala and statutory guarantees for the interference of the St. Petersburg court in the internal affairs of Sweden. Having established a confidential contact with Catherine II, the King of Sweden also led secret negotiations with Britain and Prussia. The talks were held in Stockholm where the interests of both courts were represented by Robert Adrian Liston and Adrian, Count von Borcke. Ulric Franc supported by Baron Eric Ruuth performed on behalf of King Gustav III who was staying in Finland. The aim of the negotiations was concluding the subsidy treaty between Sweden and the Triple Alliance countries. London and Berlin were ready to support Gustav III in his struggle

⁷⁴ See L. Stavenow, *op. cit.*, p. 197; R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, pp. 90–100; E. Kosiarz, *op. cit.*, pp. 301–331; B. Hennings, *Gustav...*, p. 276; W. Kalinka, *op. cit.*, pp. 200–204; A. Kersten, *Historia Szwecji*, Wrocław 1973, p. 117; T. Cieślak, *Historia Finlandii*, Wrocław 1983, p. 117; S. Askenazy, *Przymierze polsko-pruskie*, 3rd ed., Warszawa 1918, p. 96; W. Konopczyński, *Polska a Szwecja. Od pokoju oliwskiego do upadku Rzeczypospolitej 1660–1795*, Warszawa 1924, p. 235; idem, *Kwestia bałtycka do XX w.*, Gdańsk 1947, pp. 153–154. See also Gustav III to G.M. Armfelt, Svensksund, July 10, 1790, *Bref till Armfelt*, pp. 153–155; J. Glete, *op. cit.*, pp. 156–165. For information on the issue of commanding the army and the Swedish fleet during the war with Russia see also G. Artéus, *Gustav III:s militära ledarskap*, in: *Gustav III:s ryska...*, pp. 175–183.

with Russia on the condition that he continued the war relieving the Turkish. In relation to that issue, the king wrote to Franc on June 7, 1790 that he had just got a personal letter from Frederick William II. He promised Gustav III nothing more and nothing less than Estonia and Livonia in the event of a success and the boundaries of the treaty of Nystad of 1721 in the event of a failure. The Prussian monarch, however, asked the King of Sweden not to start separate negotiations with Russia and in no case invite Spain to participate in the negotiations. Despite tempting offers from Berlin, Gustav III preferred to make peace with Russia about which he informed his trusted collaborator. What seems to be the most interesting, the Swedish king, involved in the heavy war, dreamed of playing the role of a mediator in the dispute between England and Spain. He obviously had to quickly give up those dreams. Yet, he did not stop a double game in relation to the allied powers. On July 23, 1790 he wrote to Eric Ruuth that he sent him a proxy to sign the subsidy convention with the Triple Alliance countries. He stressed, however, at once that if the empress offered him peace, he would surely accept the offer and then, of course, he would not ratify the convention concluded by Ruuth. If that did not happen, he demanded that the convention was concluded before the information about Russian rejection of the Swedish peace proposals reached Stockholm. In that way, Gustav III expected to irreversibly set England at variance with Russia, which itself was, in his opinion, worth the trouble. Two days later, on July 25, the king informed Ulric Gustaf Franc that he had accepted the idea of Armfelt's meeting with Russian peace negotiator, Igelström. In the same letter, however, he wrote the following: "So now the most important issue is to conclude a treaty or convention with three allies on the best possible conditions, in other words, at the cost of the highest subsidies. Money is, in fact, the most important. When you send your convention here, before we ratify it, we will have enough time to negotiate separate peace. If it fails, however, I will of course immediately ratify the treaty which you will sign". So at the end of July 1790 Gustav III had already decided to conclude "the particular pace" with Russia and only a totally unexpected series of unfavourable events could dissuade him from doing so⁷⁵.

At the same time Staël von Holstein anxiously received contrasting news coming from Finland. On July 25, 1790 he wrote that the Russian envoy, Ivan M. Simolin, supported by the Danish envoy, circulated false news in Paris that the Russians had won the great victory over the rowing fleet of Gustav III on July 3. A few days later, however, he received the news of great losses

⁷⁵ See G.M. Armfelt to Gustav III, May 25, 1790, *Bref till Armfelt*, pp. 143–145; O. Igelström to G.M. Armfelt, Villmanstrand, May 23, 1790, *ibidem*, pp. 145–146; Gustav III to G.M. Armfelt, Svensksund, July 8 and Värälä, July 28, 1790, *ibidem*, p. 153, 164; Gustav III to U.G. Franc, Björkö Sund, June 7 and Svensksund, July 25, 1790, *Bref till Wachtmeister och Franc*, pp. 125, 135; Gustav III to E. Ruuth, Svensksund, July 23, 1790, *ibidem*, p. 138.

incurred by the Swedish fleet in the same battle. He anxiously waited for the confirmation or denial of those rumours by the court of Stockholm. It was not until the beginning of August 1790 that the news of the victory of Gustav III at the battle of Svensksund reached Paris. Only then did Staël tell his monarch about a very good reception of the news in the French capital. Only the court, where the Russian party had long been very strong, did not share the joy of the street. According to the ambassador, the French public opinion did not share to the slightest extent the court's sympathy for St. Petersburg. In the same message, Staël von Holstein tried to convince Gustav III of the need of the rapprochement with the court of London. He wrote about pro-Swedish attitude of English public opinion. Craufurd, who had just returned from London, told him that the Duke of Dorset, during dinner attended by 70 people, had said that Britain should settle on to conclude a formal alliance with Sweden. The speech of the duke was applauded by all those who were present. In relation to the French issues, the ambassador remained pessimistic since he stated that the agitation in France had calmed down only for a moment and the actions of the National Assembly seemed incomprehensible. "It is possible to understand what its leaders think only supposing that they want to provoke a counterrevolution by bringing everything to the extreme, causing despair and arousing widespread desire for the matters to take a different turn"⁷⁶.

On August 12, 1790 Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein sent a report to Stockholm on the basis of which the historians of the French Revolution recognise him as a strong supporter of the constitutional system and the aristocratic liberal after the Swedish fashion. He wrote in it that the crisis in France was deepening each day and the current constitution seemed impractical both, due to adopted political arrangements and because of the efforts of the opposition which was doing everything to invalidate it. According to Staël, especially the leaders of the people's party were the cause of the greatest evil because they wanted to establish a government too weak to effectively govern 24 million people. They also heated up hostile sentiments against the nobility, the clergy and all those who disagreed with their views. Staël did not spare the aristocratic party either accusing it of acting against the public order and safety. He drew attention to the intrigues of the Prince of Condé. He also wrote about the counterrevolutionary rebellion of Lyon citizens, stating on that occasion that the city could be a useful support for Condé if he decided to enter France from the Savoie region. Staël did not think, however, that the counterrevolution could break out without a participation of foreign powers. In France alone the number of the dissatisfied was not too big and

⁷⁶ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, July 25, 29 and August 5, 1790, RA, Gallica vol. 474; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, p. 167.

a violence of freedom enthusiasts was of such a nature that in case of the least resistance a terrible massacre of its opponents could have been carried out. The Swedish diplomat also claimed that France was threatened by the total disintegration of the country, which was to be caused by the citizens' refraining from paying taxes. Additionally, he paid attention to the possible outbreak of the counterrevolution. However, he only expected its success if the opponents of the revolution were supported by a foreign military intervention. However, even if those events could be avoided, he predicted that France would for a long time remain a weak state focused only on its own internal problems. The content of the message also explicitly shows that Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein was a strong opponent of the system of the government which had been at that time shaped in France since he perceived it as a cause of most problems with which the French state was struggling at that time. If the ambassador was a supporter of the constitutional system, he certainly thought of such a constitution that would guarantee existence of the strong executive power which would have adequate instruments to rule and would be able to effectively control the situation in the whole country⁷⁷.

In the further part of the quoted message, the ambassador discussed rivalry between the Duke of Orléans, whom he never liked, and La Fayette, towards whom he had always been friendly. On August 12, 1790 he wrote about him that he was perhaps the only politician who tried to fight the Duke of Orléans being his dogged enemy since the memorable events of October 6, 1789. According to Staël, La Fayette played a very vague role, not participating in any conspiracy and not wanting to join any faction. The ambassador argued, however, that the marquis feared above all not being considered a royalist, as the popularity and recognition of the public opinion were the driving force of his actions and he would be willing to sacrifice a lot to gain fame. His aim was to obtain permission from the king to determine the composition of the future government. La Fayette, in fact, wanted to distribute favours dependent on the ministers to gain the majority in the assembly for the king. According to Staël, the plan was wise but the king, fearing that La Fayette could use his power to limit the king's competence, did not decide to entrust him with running his businesses. In that way, the marquis had lost the trust of the king. Staël was not sure whose advice Louis XVI was listening to [and at the time those were the Count of Mirabeau and Hans Axel von Fersen – author's note] but he claimed that they were giving the king doubtful and dangerous projects. The ambassador also claimed that the present ministry was unpopular in the assembly because it secured the king's interests and it had lost the monarch's trust, since it had several times defended the

⁷⁷ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, August 12, 1790, Gallica vol. 474.

assembly's interests. Thus, Necker indicated that he would be willing to give up participation in that government. However, he withheld his resignation. Apart from him there was no one who could and would wish to deal with the public affairs. Describing a political situation on the French political scene Staël von Holstein wrote that: "Nothing has yet been brought to an end, all people are divided and all parties behave as if the purpose of their action was not striving after restoration of the order and peace but maintaining eternal anarchy. A lot is said about joining the people's party, namely the party of La Fayette, with the Lameth's party. A lot of people have hoped so but others have strongly opposed it. This could be useful if the combination led to the moderation of the extremes. If, however, it was the opposite and if combining both parties led to the radicalisation of moderate opinions, it would constitute a serious danger"⁷⁸.

But before the report of Staël von Holstein got into the hands of Gustav III, Finland had made final decisions on the cessation of hostilities. It is true that on July 31, 1790 Robert Liston and Adrian Heinrich von Borcke in Stockholm put their signatures on the subsidised treaties that London and Berlin had decided finally to conclude with Sweden but it did not have the slightest impact on the actions of the Swedish king. In the secret instruction for Gustaf Mauritz Armfelt of August 12, 1790 he ordered his negotiator not to break off his talks with the Russians but strive to sign a definitive peace agreement. Only two days later peace negotiations were finalised. On August 14, 1790 the Swedish-Russian peace treaty was signed in Värälä. It provided the restoration of peace on the basis of the *status quo ante bellum*, silently liquidated the Russian guarantee for the regime of Sweden from before 1789 and meant *de facto* the recognition of the amendment of the Swedish constitution implemented in February 1789 by the St. Petersburg court. Since the treaty did not contain any additional conditions, it could be recognised as a major success of the Swedish diplomacy. As both sides were interested in ending the war as soon as possible, the treaty was ratified almost immediately. Catherine II ratified the act in Tsarskoye Selo on August 17, 1790 while Gustav III ratified a peace treaty with Russia in the camp at Värälä on August 19. Both sides were almost equally satisfied with the signed treaty. Catherine II regained

⁷⁸ See *ibidem*. For the same message see *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 167–169. See also A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige...*, p. 213. It might be worth paying attention to the fact that in the letter to Eric Ruuth, written on the same day, Staël, informing the baron of his efforts to obtain another loan, also asked him to make the Swedish government officially disclaim the rumours about the awful state of his finances since those were serious obstacles in his talks with the Paris bankers. See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to E. Ruuth, Paris, August 12, 1790, RA, Gallica vol. 474. For more information on the events described by the ambassador, the position of La Fayette on the French political scene and his competition with the Count of Mirabeau and the Lameth brothers see A. Mathiez, *Rewolucja...*, pp. 90, 92–93, 94–96.

the freedom of movement in relation to Turkey and significantly strengthened her bargaining position in negotiations with the Triple Alliance countries. Meanwhile, Gustav III, getting through the conflict, which from the beginning took a very unfavourable turn to him, unscathed could focus on other problems of the European policy. For many contemporary observers it was quite an obvious matter that France would soon become the main object of his interest. Everything also indicated that the main advisers to the king in French matters were conservatives, like Evert Taube and Hans Axel von Fersen, and not liberals, like Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein⁷⁹.

⁷⁹ See *Instruction secrète pour la conférence du 12 Août [1790]* prepared by Gustav III for G.M. Armfelt, *Bref till Armfelt*, pp. 167–168. For the content of the peace treaty of Värälä see The Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw (Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych w Warszawie), the Public Archives of Potocki's Family (Archiwum Publiczne Potockich), No. 227, pp. 724–726. For more information on the circumstances of the negotiations on concluding the treaty as well as information on the influence of pacification in the North on the European political situation see R.H. Lord, *Drugi rozbiór Polski*, Warszawa 1973, pp. 112–113; R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, pp. 101–102; L. Stavenow, *op. cit.*, p. 202; N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, p. 24; O. Jägerskiöld, *op. cit.*, p. 335; B. Hennings, *Gustav...*, p. 277; S. Askenazy, *op. cit.*, p. 106; T. Cieślak, *op. cit.*, p. 118 (Here, incorrect information that Sweden obliged itself to pay Russia significant war reparations). It is worth drawing attention to the fact that concluding peace with Russia, Gustav III expected that at any moment the war between Austria and Prussia could break out. Meanwhile, however, on July 27, 1790 the Austro-Prussian convention was signed in Reichenbach, pursuant to which, Prussia abandoned the idea of implementing Hertzberg's plan and Austria abandoned its acquisitions at the expense of Turkey. Moreover, the court of Vienna pledged to withdraw from the eastern war and not to help Russia. See *Historia dyplomacji*, pp. 430–432; Z. Anusik, *Rzeczpospolita wobec wojny wschodniej (1787–1792) i wojny szwedzko-rosyjskiej (1788–1790)* in: *Polska wobec wielkich konfliktów w Europie nowożytnej. Z dziejów dyplomacji i stosunków międzynarodowych w XV–XVIII wieku*, R. Skowron (ed.), Kraków 2010, pp. 160–164. It is not necessary to add that both, the convention concluded in Reichenbach and the peace signed in Värälä significantly influenced the change of the political situation in the Central and Eastern Europe.

CHAPTER FOUR

FIRST ATTEMPTS TO RESCUE THE ROYAL FAMILY: THE SWEDISH DIPLOMACY TOWARDS FRANCE FROM AUGUST 1790 TO JUNE 1791

AT A CROSSROADS: THE FOREIGN POLICY OF GUSTAV III FROM AUGUST 1790 TO MAY 1791

The treaty of Värälä had not solved any of Gustav III's problems. Although Sweden had confirmed its sovereignty, it came out of the war with an empty treasury and first symptoms of serious economic difficulties. The Swedish nobility hated its monarch and was certain to cause serious problems in the king's domestic policy. Thus, one of Gustav III's first decisions after signing a peace treaty with Russia was to accelerate the execution of one of the leaders of the confederation of Anjala, Colonel Johan Henrik Hästesko. On August 18, 1790 the king wrote to Carl Axel Wachtmeister: "What needs to be done must be done quickly, so as all to be done before my return". He also ordered the Riksdrots that the place of the execution should be guarded by townspeople. He wanted to convince European public opinion that it was the will of the entire nation to severely punish the rebels and thus the king was forced to resort to such harsh measures. Two days later he wrote to Ulric Gustaf Franc that he sent without ratification the subsidy convention that had been negotiated in Stockholm with representatives of the Triple Alliance countries. On this occasion, he asked the Secretary of State to describe him what a reaction of the envoy of Prussia, Adrian Heinrich von Borcke, to the Swedish peace with Russia was. Unfortunately, we do not know the answer of Franc but the Polish envoy to the Swedish capital, Jerzy Michał Potocki, wrote that after having received the message of the treaty of Värälä the Prussian envoy "looked like a dead person and was truly depressed". The Prussian diplomat's reaction was by all means justified. Sweden's withdrawal from the war with Russia (in the face of Berlin's and London's preparations for a war with the St. Petersburg court)

ruled out the possibility of a broad coalition of England, Prussia, Holland, Sweden, Turkey and the Republic of Poland which could offset the power of the Russian court. What is more, Sweden not only interrupted negotiations with the representatives of the Triple Alliance in Stockholm but also suspended negotiations on the Polish-Swedish alliance treaty that were conducted in Warsaw by Lars von Engeström. The Swedish-Turkish relations worsened after signing the treaty of Värälä as well. Thus, in the second half of August 1790 Sweden was completely isolated in the international arena¹.

Meanwhile, Sweden received information concerning the succession to the Polish throne. In first decade of September, Gustav III re-established closer relations with the Prussian envoy to Stockholm. Adrian Heinrich von Borcke was seeing the king so often that he even moved to his summer residence, Drottningholm. Talks with the representative of Frederick William II convinced the ruler of Sweden that it was possible for him to get the Polish crown. At the same time, the Swedish envoy to Warsaw restarted negotiations on the signing of the Polish-Swedish alliance treaty. On October 19, 1790 Gustav III informed Lars von Engeström about his own candidacy for the Polish crown. The Swedish monarch tried to undermine the candidature of the Elector of Saxony and present his own qualities. He tried to encourage his envoy to Warsaw to accept and support these unexpected plans. The Swedish king had well assessed the current political situation. He believed that both Russia, embroiled in the Turkish war, and the Prussian court, policy of which had frequently undermined the trust of the Poles, would not be able to prevent his plans. However, Gustav III's projects encountered an obstacle that Stockholm did not take into account. Lars von Engeström was opposed to his monarch's plans and simply did not disclose them to Warsaw politicians. In his opinion, the disclosure of Gustav III's ideas could further complicate the already strained relations between Sweden and the Republic of Poland. On November 7, 1790 Engeström finally overcame all difficulties and led to the signing of the preliminaries of the Polish-Swedish alliance treaty. And when it seemed that the Polish-Swedish closer relations

¹ See Gustav III to C.A. Wachtmeister, Svensksund, August 18, 1790, *Kon. Gustaf III:s bref till Riks-Drotsen Grefve Carl Axel Wachtmeister och Stats-Sekreteraren Ulric Gustaf Franc, efter handskrifter på Trolle Ljungby* [further on: *Bref till Wachtmeister och Franc*], G. Andersson (ed.), Örebro 1860, p. 89; Gustav III to U.G. Franc, Värälä, August 20, 1790, *ibidem*, p. 142; J.M. Potocki to I. Potocki, Stockholm, September 3, 1790, The Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw (Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych w Warszawie), the Public Archives of Potocki's Family (Archiwum Publiczne Potockich), No. 227, p. 216. See also Z. Anusik, *Misja polska w Sztokholmie w latach 1789–1795*, Łódź 1993, pp. 102–103; idem, *Rokowania o polsko-szwedzki traktat sojuszniczy w 1790 roku*, "Zapiski Historyczne", vol. LXI, 1996, issue 2–3, pp. 37–38 and idem, *O szwedzki alians. Karta z dziejów stosunków politycznych pomiędzy Sztokholmem a Warszawą w dobie Sejmu Czteroletniego*, "Acta Universitatis Lodziensis", Folia historica 57, Łódź 1996, pp. 100–101; B. Hennings, *Gustav III. En biografi*, Stockholm 1957, pp. 299–302, 309.

were only a matter of time, Gustav III decided to aspire to the crown of the Jagiellonian and Vasa dynasty. Thus, the Swedish envoy to Warsaw tried to dissuade his ruler from his plans. His arguments did not convince the king, though. Gustav III wanted immediate benefits. He needed money to pay off the debts and finance his new political aspirations. The plans could be possibly realised after having won the Polish crown. A peace treaty negotiated in Warsaw by Engeström could not make them come true, though. In such a situation Gustav III eventually began to consider plans of Sweden participating in a partition of Poland².

The king's letter to Engeström dated November 26, 1790 mentioned the possibility of obtaining Polish territories for Sweden. Although Władysław Konopczyński claimed that it was the court of Berlin that proposed Gustav III to participate in the partition of Poland, it should be assumed that the project was presented in Stockholm by Catherine II. In the autumn of 1790 the ruler of Sweden was negotiating both, with the Triple Alliance and the St. Petersburg court. On November 11, 1790 Adrian Heinrich, Count von Borcke presented to the king a broad memorandum on perspectives of the Swedish policy in the East. The main aim of the Prussian envoy was to persuade Sweden to join the Triple Alliance and take part in war against Russia. He assured the king of a wartime determination of the allies who decided to use stronger measures as to force Catherine II to accept conditions on which Leopold II had agreed in Reichenbach. An alliance with England and Prussia was to be beneficial for Gustav III. Borcke mentioned the Turkish subsidies of 24 million francs a year, an alliance with the Republic of Poland and the possibility of revising the Russian border. Once again it seemed that in November 1790 the primary objective of Prussian diplomacy was to encourage Sweden to join an anti-Russian alliance. Yet, the Prussian envoy did not mention any territorial acquisitions at the expense of the Republic

² For more information on Gustav III's aspirations to the Polish crown see A. Raphael, *Bidrag till historien om Gustaf III:s planer på Polen och dermed sammanhängande underhandlingar under åren 1788–91*, Upsala 1874; W. Konopczyński, *Polska a Szwecja. Od pokoju oliwskiego do upadku Rzeczypospolitej 1660–1795*, Warszawa 1924, pp. 239–249; idem, *Lars von Engeströms mission i Polen 1787–1791. Ett bidrag till historien om Gustaf III:s polska politik*, "Historisk Tidskrift", vol. XLIV, Stockholm 1924, pp. 1–54. For more recent developments in the field see Z. Anusik, *O polską koronę. Dwór sztokholmski wobec kwestii sukcesji tronu w Polsce w dobie Sejmu Czteroletniego*, in: *Studia i materiały z dziejów nowożytnych*, K. Matwijowski, S. Ochmann-Staniszevska (eds), Prace historyczne XIII, Wrocław 1995, pp. 147–167 and idem, *Szwedzki rywal Fryderyka Augusta. Gustaw III wobec projektów sukcesji tronu w Polsce w latach 1790–1792*, "Rocznik Łódzki", vol. XLIV, 1997, pp. 89–115. It should be added that at the same time Gustav III began to consider the idea of taking action against Denmark and conquering Norway. See B. Hennings, *op. cit.*, p. 278; O. Jägerskiöld, *Den svenska utrikespolitikens historia*, vol. II, part 2 (1721–1792), Stockholm 1957, pp. 337–338; B. v. Schinkel, *Minnen ur Sveriges nyare historia samlade af...*, C.W. Bergman (ed.), part 2 (*Gustaf III och hans tid 1788–1792*), Stockholm 1852, pp. 161–166.

of Poland in case Sweden decided to make an alliance with Berlin, London, Istanbul and the Hague. On the contrary, he considered Poland a valuable and desirable partner for the planned alliance. Still, Gustav III wrote about the benefits proposed to him. In his letter to Engeström, however, it was not written that the proposals of the partition came from the Prussian envoy. Thus, the proposal of Sweden participating in the partition of Poland must have been made by the St. Petersburg court. In the autumn of 1790 Russia tried to convince Gustav III to respect the provisions of the treaty of Värälä and make him remain neutral in the expected conflict of St. Petersburg and the Triple Alliance. The Prussian envoy had to obey provisions of an alliance treaty that the court of Berlin had signed with the Republic of Poland in March 1790. On the contrary, the Russian representative in Stockholm could act freely on the matter. At the end of October 1790 a special envoy of Catherine II, General Peter A. von der Pahlen, arrived to the capital of Sweden with a task of preventing Sweden from joining an anti-Russian alliance of Berlin and London. It may be assumed that it was von der Pahlen who presented to the Swedish king the prospect of territorial acquisitions at the expense of the Republic of Poland. He probably made that proposal on behalf of Catherine II who was not aware of Gustav III's plans concerning the Polish throne. However, in November of 1790 Gustav III still hoped for getting the Polish crown and, therefore, strongly rejected the idea of the partition. Pahlen also seemed to withdraw from it, as he promised that Russia would support the Swedish king's succession to the Polish throne³.

In the end of November 1790 Gustav III was faced with a choice between two alternative proposals. He could choose either an alliance or a political cooperation proposed to him by Berlin and St. Petersburg, respectively. Yet, Russian proposals were not sincere. It was a tactical manoeuvre of the St. Petersburg court that was to divert Gustav III's attention from the Russian-Turkish war. However, the tactics of the Russian court brought expected results. Gustav III, against Lars von Engeström's advice, became deeply involved in the Polish succession. In January 1791 the tsarina reaffirmed her support for the candidate plans of the King of Sweden in the Republic of Poland. Undoubtedly, it would be Catherine II's major advantage

³ See Gustav III to L. v. Engeström, Haga Palace, November 26, 1790, Riksarkivet in Stockholm [further on: RA], Polonica vol. 223, no page numbering (that remark applies to all files of Riksarkivet); W. Konopczyński, *Polska...*, p. 248 and note 213 on p. 346; A.H. v. Borcke to U.G. Franc, Stockholm, November 11, 1790 and the memorial enclosed to the letter "Sur les intérêts présents de la Suède", RA, Borussica vol. 180. For a detailed discussion on the problem see Z. Anusik, *Czy dwór berliński proponował Szwecji udział w drugim rozbiórce Polski? Przyczynek do dziejów stosunków politycznych pomiędzy Sztokholmem, Berlinem i Warszawą w latach 1789–1792*, in: *Oświeceni wobec rozbiorów Polski*, J. Grobis (ed.), Łódź 1998, pp. 43–63. See also O. Jägerskiöld, *op. cit.*, p. 339.

if she obtained Gustav III's support in the conflict between Russia and the Triple Alliance countries. The anti-Russian advisers of the king tried to convince him that the court of St. Petersburg made empty promises. They tried to show him how inconvenient it would be for Russia to have the King of Sweden as its neighbour reigning on both sides of the Baltic Sea. But it was all in vain. Gustav III was convinced that it would be possible for him to get the Polish crown. On January 28, 1791 the Secretary of State, Ulric Gustaf Franc, informed Engeström that the ruler of Sweden would try to obtain the Polish crown if only the Elector of Saxony did not accept it. At the same time, the King of Sweden was considering other possibilities of increasing his influence in the international arena as well. In early 1791 he presented in St. Petersburg and Copenhagen a project to create an alliance of three northern countries. Undoubtedly, Gustav III counted on the fact that a cooperation with countries with which Sweden had recently been in bad relations and even in a state of war would gain him both courts' support for his Polish projects. However, it cannot be ruled out that he saw in Denmark and Russia future allies in a war against the revolutionary France. The prospects for those negotiations were good, as the Russians also wanted to sign a similar agreement (though they did not intend to cooperate with Sweden against France) in order to close the Baltic Sea for fleets of the enemy countries⁴.

As the Swedish-Russian agreement had not been signed yet, in February 1791 Gustav III started talks with the courts of Berlin and London once again. At that time, the position of the Swedish king in the international arena was undoubtedly strong. The imminent outbreak of an armed conflict between the Triple Alliance countries and the St. Petersburg court was widely expected. Thus, both sides aimed to incline the Stockholm court to help them in the future war. Both, in Stockholm (where English and Prussian envoys were doing everything possible to provide their courts with Gustav III's support in an expected conflict) and St. Petersburg (where the Swedish ambassador, Curt von Stedingk, was trying to bargain for Russian fortresses Nyslott and Högfors) diplomatic negotiations were taking place from which the Swedes expected to benefit most. Stedingk was

⁴ See A. Raphael, *op. cit.*, pp. 67–68, 70–71; W. Konopczyński, *Polska...*, p. 243; A. Deboli to Stanisław August, St. Petersburg, January 21, 1791, *Rok nadziei i rok klęski 1791–1792. Z korespondencji Stanisława Augusta z posłem polskim w Petersburgu Augustynem Deboli*, J. Łojek (ed.), Warszawa 1964, p. 30; U.G. Franc to L. v. Engeström, Stockholm, January 28, 1791, RA, *Polonica* vol. 224; Z. Anusik, *O polską...*, pp. 153–156; idem, *Szwedzki...*, pp. 101–106; idem, *Misja...*, pp. 114–115. See also A. Geffroy, *Gustave III et la cour de France. Suivi d'une étude critique sur Marie-Antoinette et Louis XVI apocryphes*, vol. II, Paris 1867, p. 121 and R.H. Lord, *Drugi rozbiór Polski*, Warszawa 1973, pp. 121–122. The Russian preparations in case of an attack of Prussia or Sweden see *Archiv Gosudarstviennogo Sovieta*, vol. I (*Soviet v carstvovanije Jekateriny II 1768–1796*), I.A. Chistovich (ed.), St. Petersburg 1869, p. 826 and fol. (a meeting of the State Council of January 16/27, 1791).

not exaggerating when in the spring of 1791 he wrote to Gustav III that: "The whole world thinks that Your Majesty maintains a balance in his hands". In March 1791, when his efforts for the Polish crown were the most ambitious, Gustav III, convinced of his great potential, broke off negotiations on the signing of an alliance treaty with the Republic of Poland. At the same time, he tried to benefit the most from his negotiations with the Triple Alliance countries and the St. Petersburg court. Thus, he informed negotiators of both sides about counter-offers and waited which side decided to offer him more regarding territorial or financial benefits. In the meantime, the parliament opposition in England paralysed William Pitt's plan to send a fleet on the Baltic Sea, which in turn forced Prussia to retreat as well. At the end of April 1791 it was obvious that an expected conflict would probably never break out⁵. Yet, the court of Stockholm did not seem to worry too much about it. Gustav III drew his attention to the events taking place in France.

The Swedish king was deeply interested in French problems. He did not take any serious steps against France only because he had to deal with other, more important from his point of view, issues. Yet, memorials on the regulation of the Swedish-French trade relations submitted by the Chevalier Jean de Gaussen in August and September 1790 did not interest him. The king simply did not intend to trade with the revolutionary France. He was more inclined to the idea of organising a large monarchical crusade to save Louis XVI's throne. On September 3, 1790 Gustav III wrote to Evert Taube that according to Hans Axel von Fersen the situation in France was very bad.

⁵ See Z. Anusik, *Misja...*, pp. 117–118; idem, *O polską...*, pp. 157–159; idem, *Szwedzki...*, p. 107; idem, *Czy dwór...*, pp. 59–60. A fragment of the letter of C. v. Stedingk to Gustav III as cited in R.H. Lord, *op. cit.*, p. 122. See also Stanisław August to A. Deboli, Warszawa, March 16 and 26, 1791; *Rok...*, p. 35, pp. 37–38; J.H. Rose, *William Pitt and National Revival*, London 1915, p. 593; A. Geffroy, *op. cit.*, p. 121. More about London and Berlin's preparations for a war with Russia, diplomatic activities associated with those armaments and the failure of actions against the St. Petersburg court see S. Askenazy, *Przymierze polsko-pruskie*, 3rd ed., Warszawa 1918, pp. 109–140; J. Ehrman, *The Younger Pitt. The Years of Acclaim*, London 1969, pp. 644–666; R.H. Lord, *op. cit.*, pp. 131–136; I. de Madariaga, *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great*, London–New Haven 1981, p. 417. W. Konopczyński wrote about the failure of Pitt's cabinet's war plans that: "The war between the biggest producer of grain and wood and their biggest consumer was absurd". See idem, *Kwestia bałtycka do XX w.*, Gdańsk 1947, p. 156. It should be noted, though, that one of the essential elements of Pitt's political plans was to replace trade with Russia with a trade with the Republic of Poland. The English-Prussian-Polish talks on renouncing Gdańsk in return for concessions on the Prussian tariffs were taking place in the parallel with Stockholm's negotiations on the military cooperation of Sweden. For their progress in the first months of 1791 see W. Kalinka, *Sejm Czteroletni*, 5th ed., vol. II, part 1, Kraków 1895, pp. 290–311; S. Askenazy, *op. cit.*, pp. 119–120; Z. Libiszowska, *Misja polska w Londynie w latach 1769–1795*, Łódź 1966, pp. 103–104; C.T. Odhner, *Gustaf III och Katarina II efter freden i Värälä*, Stockholm 1895, pp. 11–13.

Therefore, the king wrote what follows: "It seems to me that the mess is at its highest there and such a league as the Greeks had organised against Troy should be arranged as to restore order and avenge the honour of the crowned heads. I would love to be Agamemnon of that army". Till the end of his life Gustav III was to dream of being a chief commander of the troops that should restore the old order in France. For the time being, however, he had to postpone his dreams. In October 1790 the National Assembly officially introduced a tricolour flag for French ships. In January 1791 the French *chargé d'affaires* at Stockholm, the Chevalier de Gaussen, handed to Ulric Gustaf Franc an official note informing about a change of the national flag. Gustav III did not accept it and he even proposed in St. Petersburg and Copenhagen that Russia, Sweden and Denmark should not respect that flag at the Baltic Sea. The proposal was well received by both courts which did not intend to accept in their ports French ships with a tricolour flag on the mast, either. What is more, the king was increasingly interested in actions of the court of Madrid as he perceived it as a potential ally against the revolutionary France. Gustav III was pleased by the news that also Spain refused to recognise a tricolour flag and closed its ports for French ships. French emigrants also counted on the Spanish court as they tried to acknowledge politicians from Madrid of their plans on the future invasion on France. Yet, the visit of Charles, Count of Artois in Madrid in February 1791 did not bring any results. The Spanish court decided to wait for further developments in the international arena⁶.

After his failure expedition to Madrid, the Count of Artois decided to get closer to the court of Stockholm. On April 8, 1791 he wrote from Parma to Gustav III and asked the King of Sweden to support his efforts in Istanbul to obtain several million *livres* of the Turkish subsidy. According to the count, Georg Joseph, Baron von Brentano, would be the best mediator in the negotiations as he was known for his talents and eagerness. The count referred to Gustav III as to a former ally of France and the guarantor of the treaty of Westphalia and emphasised that all his actions were taken in the interest of Louis XVI. It is doubtful, however, that the Swedish king, informed by Hans Axel von Fersen and Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein about the real attitude of the royal couple to the emigrants, could believe in the latter statement. Yet, it should be assumed that he did not refuse to support the grandson of Louis XV. At the same time, the ruler of Sweden made some decisions that proved his hostility towards the revolutionary France. On April 8, 1791

⁶ See J. de Gaussen to C.W. v. Düben, Stockholm, September 20 and 24, 1790, RA, Gallica vol. 533; Gustav III to E. Taube, September 3, 1790, *ibidem*, Stafsundsarkivet, Evert Taubes Samling, vol. I; C.G. Ehrensward to Gustav III, Madrid, February 14, 1791, *ibidem*, Hispanica vol. 33. See also N. Åkeson, *Gustaf III:s förhållande till franska revolutionen*, vol. I, Lund 1885, p. 101.

Gustav III wrote to his envoy to the Parliament of the Reich in Regensburg, Baron Carl Gustaf Oxenstierna, and ordered him to support requests of the German princes who had estates in Alsace and Lorraine. The princes felt wronged by decrees of the National Assembly of August 4, 1789 which abolished their courts and a personal servitude of peasants. Although the National Constituent Assembly proposed a compensation, they rejected it. In December 1790, when the conquest of Belgium was completed, Emperor Leopold II referred to the treaty of Westphalia, wrote to the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Armand Marc, Count of Montmorin, and officially protested against applying French provisions to the German princes. The case was a convenient excuse for a foreign intervention in France and therefore was eagerly welcomed by the Stockholm court. Thus, Gustav III tried to get closer to the court of Vienna. At the beginning of April 1791 Georg Gustaf Wrangel, the Swedish envoy to Italy living in Genoa, met Emperor Leopold II with whom he had a long conversation about the current situation in France. As Austria did not intend to neither interfere in French matters nor strengthen its relations with Sweden, Gustav III was forced to turn to the St. Petersburg court. He had been thinking about it for a long time. He was forced to cooperate with Russia from the moment it became clear that there would be no war between the Triple Alliance countries and St. Petersburg. What is more, Catherine II's support became necessary when Stockholm received the news that the Parliament (Diet) in Warsaw had adopted the Constitution of May 3. Only the empress's help could prolong Gustav III's hopes for the Polish crown or any territorial acquisitions. Only the cooperation with Russia could guarantee him success of the political plans against the revolutionary France⁷. For these reasons, the king impatiently awaited the results of General Curt von Stedingk's talks in St. Petersburg.

⁷ See Charles, Count of Artois to Gustav III, Parma, April 8, 1791 (a copy), RA, Gallica vol. 521. See also N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, pp. 37–38, p. 63, pp. 76–77; A. Mathiez, *La révolution française*, vol. I (*La chute de la royauté*), Paris 1928, p. 161; idem, *Rewolucja francuska*, Warszawa 1956, p. 148. It is also worth noticing that the Swedish king was infuriated by the news that the Constitution of May 3 had been adopted and the Elector of Saxony had been invited to the Polish throne. In a letter dated approximately on May 18, 1791 he exasperatedly wrote that: "The Polish throne went berserk! The Poles will pay for it and we are going to share". See Gustav III to G.M. Armfelt, Stockholm, approximately May 18, 1791, *Konung Gustaf III:s bref till Friherre G.M. Armfelt* [further on: *Bref till Armfelt*], E. Tegnér (ed.), in: *Historiska Handlingar*, vol. XII, Stockholm 1883, p. 177. Thus, Gustav III, disappointed in his hopes of winning the Polish crown, returned to old projects of partitions of the Republic of Poland. It should be noted that the fact coincided with the arrival of the new Russian Ambassador, Otto Magnus von Stackelberg, to Stockholm. See Z. Anusik, *O polską...*, p. 160; idem, *Misja...*, p. 118; idem, *Szwedzki...*, p. 109.

THE RUSSIAN PERSPECTIVE: ST. PETERSBURG MISSION OF CURT VON STEDINGK

Curt Bogislaus Christoffer Ludvig von Stedingk came from an old Pomeranian nobility. He was born on October 26, 1746. From his mother's side he was the grandson of the famous Prussian Field Marshal, Kurt Ch. von Schwerin. Like his famous grandfather, Stedingk chose a military career. For many years he was in the French service. He was the commander of one of the infantry brigades in the war of independence of the United States. He was wounded during the siege of Savannah in 1779. He was very popular and liked at the court of Versailles. Louis XVI awarded him six thousand *livres* of a lifetime pension and a cross of the Order of the Sword for his contribution to the American war. When Stedingk returned from America in 1783, he was appointed a colonel *commandant* in his friend's, Hans Axel von Fersen, regiment, Royal Suédois. In 1787 Gustav III recalled him to Sweden. Then, he fought in a war against Russia and distinguished himself in the campaign of 1789 when he commanded the famous Savolax brigade. In the same year, he was nominated to the rank of major-general and was granted the command of a regiment in Goteborg. As Stedingk perfectly knew the pre-revolutionary France he took the new order established in that country with a grain of salt. He was also in favour of a quick restoration of the *ancien régime*. After the end of the war with Russia, in August 1790, it turned out that Gustav III decided to have him at his service. Then, he wrote to the king: "It is said, Your Majesty, that all French officers who will not join their units before March next year will be crossed out from the register. If such a disaster actually happens, I will lose 18 thousand francs of my annual income and all the fruits of 20 year faithful service. There is nothing, Your Majesty, I would not sacrifice for my Dear Lord but my heart bleeds when I lose the base of my existence in France. As a Swede I was also proud that I deserved to be called a Frenchman. What a pity that this state of affairs could no longer be maintained. Don't You, Your Majesty, bear in Your heart the best feelings for this beautiful France the current state of which must cause anger and impatience. I love it so much that I would be willing to go there immediately to shed my tears on it but for my duties and my devotion to Your Majesty that stop me in the place where I find myself now". Perhaps Gustav III decided to make Stedingk his representative at the court of St. Petersburg because he was an outspoken opponent of the revolution. The king did not care at all that his new envoy had absolutely no diplomatic experience⁸.

⁸ See E. Birck, *Stedingk Curt Bogislaus Ludvig Christoffer von*, in: *Svenska Män och Kvinnor. Biografisk Uppslagsbok* [further on: *SMoK*], vol. VII, Stockholm 1954, pp. 185–186; A. Geffroy, *op. cit.*, vol. I, Paris 1867, pp. 346–354, 413–414. A fragment of the letter of C. v. Stedingk to Gustav III as cited in A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige och den franska revolutionen. Bidrag till kännedom*

General Stedingk arrived to the Russian capital in mid-September 1790. He learnt about customs of Catherine II's court pretty soon. On November 5 he wrote to the king that the empress was willing to make an alliance with the Stockholm court. She was also pleased with Gustav III's request that a peace negotiator of the treaty of Värälä, Otto, Baron von Igelström, was the Russian Ambassador to Stockholm. Catherine II would accept such a solution on the condition that Stedingk stayed in St. Petersburg. The empress's wish was immediately met and two weeks later Curt von Stedingk received a formal nomination for the Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to the Russian capital. The envoy himself was not particularly happy with it. He was worried with the prospect of a long-term separation from the king and the homeland. He also argued that the nomination would cost him all his revenue in France and would ruin the fortune he had gathered during the 25-year service. In the message dated November 19, 1790 Stedingk wrote to Gustav III about Catherine II's hopes that England and Prussia would no longer be able to embroil her with the ruler of Sweden and would not prevent the signing of a permanent Swedish-Russian alliance. However, an old friend of Stedingk, the English envoy to St. Petersburg, Charles Whitworth, tried to convince the Swedish diplomat to the idea of an alliance with the enemies of Catherine II. He was sure that Gustav III would stand against Russia if only a war between the court of St. Petersburg and the Triple Alliance countries broke out. Stedingk fairly quickly convinced himself to the pro-Russian orientation. On December 3, 1790 he encouraged Gustav III to sign a treaty with Russia which, exhausted by the war and abandoned by Austria, needed, in his opinion, a new ally. At the same time, he advised haste and urged the king to finalise negotiations before the empress was forced by England and Prussia to end the Turkish war. In the same message Stedingk wrote that in St. Petersburg the rumour had it that Gustav III had made an alliance with the Republic of Poland. On that occasion, the Russians complained on the conduct of the Minister Lars von Engeström in Warsaw. Stedingk refuted that allegations and stated that the Polish-Swedish close relations should be no obstacle for the Swedish-Russian alliance. On the contrary, good relations with the Republic of Poland would make Gustav III even more useful for Russia. He promised, however, that his court would pay more attention to Lars von Engeström's actions in Poland⁹.

om Sveriges och Frankrikes inbördes förhållande i slutet av 1700-talet, vol. I (*Gustav III:s tid*), Stockholm 1920, p. 141; C.T. Odhner, *op. cit.*, pp. 13–14. See also *Mémoires posthumes de field-maréchal comte de Stedingk*, Comte Biörnstierna (ed.), vol. I, Paris 1847, p. 232.

⁹ See C. v. Stedingk to Gustav III, St. Petersburg, October 7/18, 1790, La Comtesse Brevern De la Gardie, *Un Ambassadeur de Suède à la cour de Catherine II. Feld-Maréchal Comte de Stedingk. Choix de dépêches diplomatiques, rapports secrets et lettres particulières de 1790 à 1796* [further on: *Stedingk et la cour de Catherine II*], vol. I, Stockholm 1919, p. 27. See also

On January 7, 1791 Curt von Stedingk wrote to Gustav III that the courts of Berlin and London had resigned from many of their original claims. Yet, they still demanded that Catherine II accept their mediation in the negotiations with Turkey. According to the Swedish envoy, who did not sympathise with either court if only the Turks had a bit of common sense, they would make peace with Russia without so weak and selfish mediators as England and Prussia. What is more, they would have never resigned from an alliance with Gustav III whose actions had saved them from an inevitable defeat. In the same message, Stedingk once again urged his lord to finalise negotiations with the St. Petersburg court, as the empress preferred an alliance with Gustav III to an agreement with the King of Prussia. On January 21 the Swedish diplomat informed the court of Stockholm that St. Petersburg received the news on Gustav III's proposal to England and Prussia. It was said that Sweden would join the Triple Alliance in return for subsidies and a relief of the debt it had incurred with the King of Prussia during the war. The Russians, Igelström among them, were hugely disappointed by the news. Stedingk tried to convince the Russian diplomat that Sweden was still ready to make a deal with Russia on the condition that the court of St. Petersburg would finally present to his king favourable conditions of a future agreement. Finally, at the beginning of next month, Curt von Stedingk had the opportunity to pass Gustav III more favourable news. On February 8, 1791 he wrote to the king about a successful finalisation of his negotiations with Alexander Bezborodko on the new French flag. Both diplomats quickly came to an agreement because the Russians, like Gustav III, did not intend to respect a tricolour flag on the Baltic Sea and decided to close their ports to all vessels with a new French flag on the mast. In the same message, Stedingk wrote that Edmond Genet, the French *chargé d'affaires* at St. Petersburg, tried to convince Bezborodko that all his actions were taken at a clear and unambiguous command of Louis XVI. Yet, the Swedish envoy could not understand the King of France who applied to the European courts with a request to recognise a new flag. Thus, he wrote that: "as a result of an unpardonable weakness of the poor king, who seems to take pleasure in the voluntary resignation from his prerogatives, he always destroys everything

C. v. Stedingk to Gustav III, St. Petersburg, October 25/November 5, November 8/19, apostille and November 22/December 3, 1790, RA, Muscovitica vol. 451. For the fragment of the message of November 8/19, 1790 see *Stedingk et la cour de Catherine II*, p. 43. It is worth noting that it is not true that Stedingk was staying in the capital of Russia until March 13, 1792 without any official accreditation to the court of Catherine II. See *Repertorium der diplomatischen Vertreter aller Länder* [further on: *Repertorium*], vol. III (1764–1815), O.F. Winter (ed.), Graz–Köln 1965, pp. 414–415. In fact, on November 19, 1790 he received a nomination for the post of the Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to St. Petersburg (he wrote about it in the message quoted above).

that could be done to his advantage". It should be emphasised that at that time the pro-Russian attitude of Stedingk was also shared by the Stockholm court. On February 11, 1791 Ulric Gustaf Franc wrote to the envoy to St. Petersburg that it was not true that the courts of London and Berlin had a profound impact on Gustav III. The allied courts were spreading the news in order to complicate and delay negotiations between Sweden and Russia. The king, faced with a choice of a new ally, would have to compare the proposals submitted to him. He would prefer, though, to make an alliance with Catherine II. Therefore, the Secretary of State told Stedingk to persuade the Russians to authorise the General von der Pahlen to sign the Swedish-Russian alliance treaty without any further loss of time¹⁰.

Meanwhile, time was running out and negotiations with the St. Petersburg court had stalled. On March 11, 1791 Curt von Stedingk wrote that there was a problem where the Swedish-Russian talks should take place. Gustav III wished to negotiate with Peter von der Pahlen in Stockholm and Catherine II preferred to negotiate with Stedingk in St. Petersburg. The Swedish king was impatient with that delay and Stedingk, at his command, intervened with Bezborodko. The vice-chancellor assured the Swedish envoy that the empress intended to send her ambassador to Stockholm but for the time being she wanted Gustav III to authorise Stedingk to start negotiations. Stedingk, in turn, demanded from the Russians to give the same authorisation to von der Pahlen. What is more, without waiting for a further development of events, he started with Arkadiy Morkov a preliminary work on the most important point of the future alliance treaty, namely a secret article on Russian subsidies for Sweden. However, he was impatient with the lack of progress in negotiations and on March 17 he wrote to Gustav III that he "would much more prefer to fight with these people than to negotiate with them". It might have seemed that Stedingk's problems would be solved when an influential favourite of Catherine II, Prince Grigory Potemkin, started negotiations on the signing of an alliance treaty. The envoy was extremely

¹⁰ See C. v. Stedingk to Gustav III, St. Petersburg, December 26, 1790/January 7, 1791 and January 10/21, 1791, apostille, RA, Muscovitica vol. 451; C. v. Stedingk to Gustav III, St. Petersburg, February 8, 1791, a private letter, *Stedingk et la cour de Catherine II*, pp. 73–74; N. Åke-son, *op. cit.*, p. 28 and A. Geffroy, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 110–112. See also U.G. Franc to C. v. Stedingk, Stockholm, February 11, 1791, RA, Muscovitica vol. 489; I. de Madariaga, *op. cit.*, p. 417; C.T. Odhner, *op. cit.*, pp. 17–19. It is worth noting that there was no progress in the Swedish-Russian negotiations probably due to the fact that in the spring of 1791 the St. Petersburg court was quite seriously considering the creation of the quadruple alliance of Russia, France, Spain and Sweden which was supposed to be a counterweight to the Triple Alliance. According to B. Dembiński, at least until June 1791 Catherine was seriously considering the possibility of the cooperation with the revolutionary France against England and Prussia. See idem, *Rosya a Rewolucya Francuska*, Kraków 1896, pp. 76–78, 87 and fol.

pleased with the fact and believed that talks on that issue would be finalised soon, especially as St. Petersburg's public opinion was impressed by the news that Gustav III made an agreement with England. What a disappointment it must have been to Stedingk when he saw that Potemkin was absorbed only by his own pleasures and there was no way to draw his attention to matters of the Russian foreign policy. In his message dated April 8, 1791 Curt von Stedingk described the behaviour of the Prince of Tauris and concluded that Potemkin gave him more work "than all the empresses together"¹¹.

In the last days April 1791 Curt von Stedingk informed Gustav III that the Russian capital was anxious about rumours that the court of Stockholm had signed a treaty with Great Britain. The envoy was satisfied with it as he thought that it would facilitate his negotiations with the Russians. He even did everything he could to alarm the Russian court. His tactics, however, did not bring the expected results. The Russians still could not determine the amount of future subsidies which they could give to Gustav III. They also did not want to resign from the fortress Nyslott that was firmly demanded by the court of Stockholm. Yet, Stedingk was sure about the final success of his negotiations. He believed that in the current situation the court of St. Petersburg would be forced to accept Gustav III's terms. Thus, on April 23, 1791 the envoy to St. Petersburg wrote to his ruler: "All eyes are on Your Majesty. Your Majesty's decision will determine the fate of Europe. I wish that Your Majesty considered all the opportunities arising from the current situation and order to properly pay for his neutrality ... Your Majesty has already reached his goal. You have saved the East. You have freed and rescued Your people. You have stopped Russian progress and made other powers remain suspended until now". A few days later Stedingk wrote once again that the St. Petersburg court was ready to finalise negotiations with Sweden. The envoy considered an alliance with Russia even more advisable, as the prospect of the English fleet emerging on the Baltic Sea seemed increasingly problematic to him. Therefore, he assured Gustav III that the Russians were willing to meet his demands. The general was eager to give his word of honour that Catherine II was going to sign an alliance treaty with Sweden. Stedingk emphasised that an appointment of Otto Magnus von Stackelberg for the post of the Russian Ambassador to Stockholm was a sign of the empress's good will. The same message included information that the new ambassador would depart for Sweden in the first days of May 1791¹².

¹¹ See C. v. Stedingk to Gustav III, St. Petersburg, February 28/March 11 and March 21/April 1, 1791, RA, Muscovitica vol. 451 and C. v. Stedingk to Gustav III, St. Petersburg, March 17 and April 8, 1791, *Stedingk et la cour de Catherine II*, pp. 97, 113.

¹² See C. v. Stedingk to Gustav III, St. Petersburg, April 11/22 and 18/29, 1791, RA, Muscovitica vol. 451 and C. v. Stedingk to Gustav III, St. Petersburg, April 23, 1791, a private letter, *Stedingk et la cour de Catherine II*, p. 122. See also C.T. Odhner, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

Mysterious information appeared in Curt von Stedingk's message dated May 10, 1791. He wrote to Gustav III that Mashkov, the counsellor of the Russian embassy at Paris, had arrived to St. Petersburg and handed him a letter addressed to Baron Evert Taube. Although the envoy was well aware that Taube was in Aachen, according to the orders attached to the letter, he immediately sent to Stockholm a courier with the mysterious package. Mashkov had to bring to the Russian capital not only the letter to Taube but also a private letter of Hans Axel von Fersen to Curt von Stedingk. In the same message, the envoy wrote that he felt overwhelmed by Fersen's news on the situation of both, the royal family and France. Stedingk was especially outraged at the fact that England, at all costs, tried to deepen France's internal difficulties and dispirit an unfortunate rival. Therefore, he desperately confessed: "Ah! I hate the English and their disgusting policy that is based on a desire to dominate everyone not by courage and virtue, but money. If I had to fight for them, Your Majesty, I know I would not carry out such a cruel order". While strongly opposing to the concept of an alliance with the court of St. James, Stedingk asked Gustav III to support unfortunate Louis XVI. He also assured him that, if only the king decided on such a solution, he would go for it without hesitation and would be willing to shed his blood for such a beautiful case. Stedingk was also convinced that if the empress made peace with the Turks, her treasures and armies would be available to Gustav III. For the time being, however, the Russians were very cautious and as they feared that Sweden might decide to make a deal with their enemies, they made some defensive preparations. General Alexander Suvorov was sent to Finland to check local fortresses because of Gustav III's armaments. Although Catherine assured Stedingk that she believed that Gustav III would not attack her, the empress's ministers were not so trusting. Especially Ivan A. Ostermann feared the possibility of a formal agreement between Sweden and the Triple Alliance. Stedingk did not dissipate the chancellor's fears as he hoped that the Russians would be more flexible in future negotiations. When he was writing that message, Curt von Stedingk was sure that Gustav III had decided to sign an alliance treaty with Russia. He also knew that his ruler paid more and more attention to France and was ready to play a great role on its political scene. Thus, he ended his message with a significant statement: "God willing, everything will be fine and Your Majesty's project will be desirably executed"¹³. All Gustav III's plans of that time focused on French issues, indeed. Thus, in the following subchapter we will concentrate on French events described from the perspective of the Swedish Ambassador to Paris.

¹³ See C. v. Stedingk to Gustav III, St. Petersburg, April 29/May 10, 1791, a private letter, RA, *Muscovitica* vol. 451; see also *Stedingk et la cour de Catherine II*, pp. 132–133.

THE REVOLUTION SLOWS DOWN: THE SITUATION IN FRANCE FROM AUGUST TO DECEMBER 1790

In his messages from the second half of August 1790 Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein deeply described the current situation on the French political scene. He wrote about an outbreak of a dangerous military rebellion in Nancy where one of Swiss regiments rebelled against its officers. Yet, he attached the greater importance to a political split in the people's party as he believed it could cause much disturbance. According to Staël, the hatred between members of the Jacobin Club led by the Lameth brothers, Joseph Antoine Barnave and Adrien Duport, and the Feuillants Club headed by Charles Maurice de Talleyrand, Honoré Gabriel, Count of Mirabeau, Isaac René Le Chapelier, Mathieu Jean, Duke of Montmorency and Father Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès was in fact far greater than the hatred between the democrats and the aristocrats. Yet, the ambassador did not overestimate a danger from that side, as Marie Joseph La Fayette, associated with the Feuillants Club, made strenuous efforts to unite both clubs. Staël von Holstein supposed that those efforts could become successful "as a personal interest of members is the first and perhaps the only driving force that inspires actions of those parties". The Swedish diplomat also regretted that on the French political scene nothing seemed more volatile than parties that were splitting and uniting all the time according to current interests or promises for the future. The ambassador was not pleased with the prospect of La Fayette and the Count of Mirabeau's reconciliation, as he suspected the latter of maintaining secret relations with the French royal couple. He could not understand how "the hero of two worlds" could come to terms with a man implicated in the scandal of October 6 and an accomplice to all crimes of Louis Philippe, Duke of Orléans. He even more disgusted the thought of a future agreement between La Fayette and the duke himself. Yet, the latter one was not perceived by Staël as a great threat to the public order since he had promised the court to stay calm if he was not oppressed. In Paris the rumour had it that the queen would prefer to reach an agreement with the Duke of Orléans, on whose behalf the Count of Mirabeau had to negotiate with the court, rather than suffer La Fayette's oppression. According to the ambassador, the situation in France was tense and people were upset as they could not find any cure for their problems. At the same time, Staël reported to Stockholm that the French-English relations had become more tense. In his opinion, France intended to keep all essential points of the *pacte de famille* with Spain, as the National Assembly decided to arm 45 warships. The French, however, did not intend to militarily defend Spanish interests. Their fleet still needed long time for preparations while the English squadron was well prepared for a war. In such a situation the assembly did not want to give any excuse to the

British to seize French colonies and destruct the French commerce. In the last of his August messages Staël von Holstein returned to a military revolt in Nancy. In his opinion, events in the capital of Lorraine took an alarming turn. The Swiss regiment, Châteaueux, rebelled once again and some feared that the Swiss royal regiment did not follow its example. Fortunately, François Claude, Marquis of Bouillé, who was the commander in Metz, set off at the head of 10–12 thousand soldiers to Nancy to bring rebels to heel and punish them. Yet, Staël was afraid that in case the marquis's expedition failed, France would have to suffer even more troubles and misfortunes¹⁴.

It is worth mentioning that Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein, who was regarded a liberal and a strong supporter of the revolution, fully sympathised with La Fayette who had ordered the General de Bouillé to fight the rebel. What is even more interesting, he only mentioned a demission of his father-in-law who in the end of August 1790 had resigned from the post of the Minister of Finance. Yet, Hans Axel von Fersen noticed that fact and on September 5, 1790 he wrote to Evert Taube that Staël was preparing to leave Paris with a dismissed Necker. In the same letter, Fersen suggested to Taube that Necker's dismissal could be a perfect excuse to recall from the French capital the former ambassador of the Stockholm court. The count unequivocally pointed to himself as the best candidate to take his place¹⁵.

The Swedish ambassador, unaware of Fersen's attempts to deprive him of his position, wrote on September 12, 1790 about a revolt of the French sailors in Brest. In his opinion, they followed an example of the soldiers and, thus, a mess in French armed forces increased. A few days later Paris received the news on signing the peace treaty of Värälä. Therefore, Staël wrote that the news about the pacification of the North amazed local public opinion, especially as peace was made without the participation of any of the allies of Sweden. Some concluded that Gustav III, dissatisfied with the courts of London and Berlin, decided to make peace not out of necessity but because of the suffered offence. Others supposed it was the cleverness of the Russian empress who preferred to come to terms with Sweden than allow the Triple Alliance countries to play the role of mediator in the Swedish-Russian conflict. Thus, the empress had achieved an important political

¹⁴ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, August 15, 19, 26 and 29, 1790, RA, Gallica vol. 474. See also *Correspondance diplomatique du baron de Staël-Holstein ambassadeur de Suède et de son successeur comme chargé d'affaires le baron Brinkman. Documents inédits sur la révolution (1783–1799) recueillis aux Archives Royales de Suède* [further on: *Corr. Staël-Holstein*], L. Leouzon Le Duc (ed.), Paris 1881, pp. 169–172. The Nancy affair see L. Villat, *La révolution et l'Empire 1789–1815*, vol. I (*Les Assemblées révolutionnaires 1789–1799*), Paris 1947, pp. 101–102.

¹⁵ See H.A. v. Fersen to E. Taube, Paris, September 5, 1790 as cited in A. Söderhjelm, *Fersen et Marie-Antoinette. Journal intime et correspondance du comte Axel de Fersen*, Paris 1930, pp. 156–157.

goal, as she destroyed Sweden's good relations with England and Prussia. Staël also wrote that it was believed in Paris that benefits of that peace would not replace the friendship of London and Berlin as well as the security that might have been guaranteed to Sweden if the treaty had been signed with the mediation of both courts. French public opinion did not approve either of the king's negligence of the interests of Turkey with which Sweden had signed formal treaties and to which it had given the most solemn promises. The above-mentioned point of view seemed to be shared by the ambassador who was in favour of a close cooperation with England and belonged to a group of Swedish politicians who were hostile towards Russia. Later in his message, Staël von Holstein wrote that a very significant Russian, well aware of the situation at the court of St. Petersburg, was to say to one of his friends that Gustav III needed peace much more than Catherine II and he had no other choice but to end war with Russia with an honourable peace. Finally, he concluded that from the empress's point of view that peace would only be a ceasefire and in a short time the Swedes could expect a terrible revenge on her part. Still, the ambassador was afraid the most that peace with Russia would inevitably make the Swedish-English relations go bad.

In the message dated September 23, 1790 Staël von Holstein described to Gustav III his last conversation with Montmorin. The French Minister of Foreign Affairs claimed that Catherine II, after having signed a peace treaty with Sweden, would like to form a league of the northern countries including Russia, Denmark, Sweden and even Spain. He also said that such a solution was favourable to France. If it only sorted out its internal problems, it would like to join the alliance as well. The Swedish ambassador did not continue that conversation because in his opinion solutions beneficial to France did not necessarily have to be beneficial to Sweden too. According to him, the league of the North would deprive Sweden of all the benefits of an alliance with England, would prevent the king's expansion in Norway and would bind the court of Stockholm with countries for which an alliance with Sweden would only be a pretext for its weakening. As for the treaty of Värälä, Staël quoted opinions that the courts of London and Berlin had legitimate reasons to be dissatisfied with Gustav III. Many people could not understand the motives of his actions. In their opinion (the ambassador included), the allied courts, which had forced in Reichenbach Emperor Leopold II to make a separate peace with the Porte, would certainly make the empress accept conditions favourable to Sweden. Staël, faithful to his views, tried to convince Gustav III that although England seemed to be very offended, it should not be difficult to re-establish good relations with it in the near future¹⁶.

¹⁶ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, September 12, 16 and 23, 1790, RA, Gallica vol. 474; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 172–174.

In the first half of October 1790 Staël von Holstein informed the court of Stockholm about a growing conflict in the south of France. The unrest which had broken out in Marseille spread on other cities of Provence and Languedoc. According to Staël, the Count of Mirabeau was to be the cause of those troubles. The ambassador was also concerned with the count's intention to go to Marseille to restore order as he was afraid that the purpose of that trip was to be completely different. The French case, however, still remained in the shadow of the developments in the international arena. Although Staël informed the king that the Russian envoy to Paris, Ivan M. Simolin, was very polite to him after the conclusion of the treaty of Värälä, he was mistrustful of him and the Russian offers for Sweden. He once again warned Gustav III against the idea of the league of the North as he still feared that it might be a revenge to Sweden and it would lead to its conflict with England and Prussia. The news of the pacification of the North significantly cooled the Swedish diplomat's relations with the representatives of the Triple Alliance in Paris. The Prussian Minister, Bernhard Wilhelm von der Goltz, did not hide his resentment and avoided contact with the ambassador. Yet, the latter one managed to maintain friendly relations with the English Ambassador, George Granville Leveson-Gower, who hoped that Gustav III would soon give up his pro-Russian policy. Staël was also frequently meeting James Quentin Craufurd who confirmed that the court of London was reluctant to the treaty of Värälä and feared the possibility of the Swedish-Russian alliance. During those meetings the ambassador tried to shift the responsibility for the Swedish-Russian peace treaty onto England and suggested to Craufurd that the court of London should not waste time and should present to Gustav III a beneficial offer of an alliance as soon as possible. Staël learnt from Craufurd that London was seriously thinking about closer relations with Sweden and, thus, decided to send new instructions for Robert Liston. The Swedish diplomat also met Sir Hugh Elliot who was staying in Paris at that time. The latter referred with understanding to the Swedish-Russian peace treaty, defended Gustav III's actions and told William Pitt that one could not think of a permanent alliance with Sweden without guaranteeing high subsidies to it. Staël von Holstein urged his lord to renegotiate with England and consistently warned him against Russia. In his opinion, Catherine II wanted to revenge on him as strongly as the emperor desired to revenge on the King of Prussia who had forced him to withdraw from a war against Turkey. As for the expected outbreak of the English-Spanish war, the ambassador informed the court of Stockholm that some advisers of Louis XVI believed that also France should take part in the conflict. He doubted that those projects would be realised, though, because

the people's party wanted to preserve peace and the French ministry had no resources to run the war¹⁷.

In October 1790 changes decisive for the future of France were taking place. Under the provisions of the new constitution departmental and district assemblies were organised, tribunals were created, monasteries and chapters were liquidated and national goods were auctioned. Louis XVI began to realise that in his country deep changes were taking place. He observed with a growing anxiety how the authority of La Fayette collapsed as the public opinion accused him of having massacred rebellious soldiers in Nancy and having radicalised the capital. Sections of Paris (in June 1790 Paris had been divided into 48 sections which replaced the former 60 counties) almost from the beginning were hostile towards the central authorities of the capital. In September and October 1790 sections voted to reprimand the king's ministers who were blamed for being inefficient and staying in touch with the aristocracy. Georges Danton, who in agreement with the leaders of the Jacobin Club acted on sections' behalf, demanded that the ministers should be judged by the court of the assembly. On October 20, however, the National Assembly rejected by a small majority a vote of no confidence in the government¹⁸. On October 21, 1790 Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein wrote that the Jacobins were so irritated by the defeat they had suffered that one should be afraid they might resort to more violent means to get their revenge. In his opinion, there was a great excitement among people and there was a reason to fear that the angry ones [a term that according to Staël was used to describe the most ardent Jacobins – author's note] would resort to the bribery to provoke inhabitants of the suburbs. The ambassador also wrote that if ever there was a need to prove the incompetence of the National Assembly, its decree on Brest would be the best example. At first, the assembly decided that there was a need to use strong measures against rebels in the port. Then, it changed its mind in order to take revenge on the government simply because a draft resolution directed against the ministers had not been outvoted. The most interesting, though, was the opinion of the Swedish diplomat. He believed that although under the provisions of the constitution the ministers were not responsible to the assembly, they should resign from their posts¹⁹.

In his next messages, Staël von Holstein still concentrated on the French cabinet crisis. On October 27, 1790 he informed Gustav III that the ministers' reluctance to resign from their posts caused the unrest among people. Thus,

¹⁷ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, October 3, 10 and 14, 1790, RA, Gallica vol. 474; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 174–175.

¹⁸ See A. Mathiez, *Rewolucja...*, pp. 146–147.

¹⁹ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, October 21, 1790, RA, Gallica vol. 474; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 175–176.

the king dismissed the Ministers of War and Navy. Staël predicted, however, that also other ministers would have to leave the government in the near future. In his opinion, Louis Philippe, Count of Ségur and Auguste, Count of La Marck stood behind the anti-government riots. Together with the Count of Mirabeau they were to make the ministry fall in order to introduce the Count of Ségur to the government. Staël was also convinced that the group was supported by both, the Lameths' faction and La Fayette. The latter, though, had already lost much of his former significance. According to the Swedish diplomat, La Fayette had been underestimated from the moment everyone began to doubt his talents and honesty. Nevertheless, the marquis decided to grasp the opportunity and have in the government people he could trust. The ambassador also noted a rumour that Louis XVI intended to use the cabinet crisis to introduce new people to the ministry and he expected that his protégés would be approved of by the Count of Mirabeau and the Count of La Marck who were said to be absolutely devoted to the queen. As Staël feared that the cabinet crisis could cause further riots and unrest, he was carefully observing actions of the Duke of Orléans. Although he realised that the party of Orléans stayed calm, he emphasised that all troubles in France began from the very moment the Duke of Orléans had returned to the country. The ambassador was preoccupied with the fact that one of the most talented people in the duke's surroundings, Pierre Ambroise Choderlos de Laclos, became his chief adviser. A few days later Staël once again wrote about changes in the government, as César, Count of La Luzerne had left the cabinet. The Count of Montmorin, the only minister that had been omitted in the request for a vote of no confidence in the government, also announced his resignation in case the king did not insist on his stay in the ministry. According to Staël, the king was satisfied with François Emmanuel, Count of Saint-Priest and he wanted that after his resignation from the ministry he became the Ambassador to Sweden, especially as Stanislas Marie, Count of Clermont-Tonnerre, who earlier had been promised to head the embassy in Stockholm, had resigned from the offered post²⁰.

In November 1790 Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein informed the court of Stockholm that Louis XVI decided that Montmorin should remain the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The designation of other ministers was also expected but it was difficult to find people who would like to become members of the ministry for such a short period of time. The new ministers were to form the government only until the assembly repealed the decree forbidding its members to work in the state administration. The ambassador also wrote that La Fayette's relations with the court had recently improved. The

²⁰ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, October 27 and 31, 1790, RA, Gallica vol. 474; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 176–177.

Swedish diplomat suspected that it was due to the king's promise that his lifeguard would be chosen from members of the Paris National Guard. Staël believed, however, that this would happen only when the National Assembly adopted decrees on the organisation of the royal house and the reorganisation of the army. At that time Staël von Holstein was preoccupied with actions of the party of Orléans, supporters of which gathered around the Marquise of Sillery and the aristocrats whom he suspected of wanting to provoke a civil war. What is more, in his opinion, the Parisian bourgeoisie had less confidence in La Fayette. The marquis had lost his popularity mainly due to his volatility and indecision. According to Staël, La Fayette was discredited in the eyes of the public opinion thanks to intrigues of the angry ones supported by the Duke of Orléans. On that occasion Staël von Holstein once again tried to convince Gustav III that the aristocrats had little influence on the French society. On the other hand, the Swedish diplomat was clearly alarmed by the fact that La Fayette's collapse had strengthened the Lameths' party. It was scandalous for him that inhabitants of Paris worshipped Charles de Lameth, the popularity of whom he took as a sign of a growing political influence of his party. In his November messages, Staël also wrote about the unrest in provinces and a permanent lack of money in the Royal Treasury. In his opinion, the warring parties were preparing projects of fighting their opponents and only thanks to the divine providence there had been no further riots in France so far. The ambassador wrote that the democrats were seriously concerned with the news that Emperor Leopold II had gathered 30 thousand imperial soldiers in Luxembourg and intended to use his army to suppress the uprising in Belgium. Staël also informed Gustav III that the Belgians decided to fight with the emperor as they had rejected his proposal for a settlement. The Swedish diplomat stated that both, the aristocrats and the democrats were carefully observing events in Belgium. The first because they hoped that the Austrian army would invade France soon. The latter ones feared the same troops and they hoped, in turn, that the Austrians would stay in Belgium for a longer time. Finally, in his message dated November 18, 1790 Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein wrote to Gustav III that in the face of such a great crisis in France everything might be changed even if the smallest foreign army crossed the French border. He also claimed that the angry ones feared that European powers would create a league which would aim at restoring peace and order in France and establishing a government that would preserve such a state of affairs²¹. Yet, if Gustav III took an opinion of his diplomat for granted, he made a serious mistake. Staël von Holstein

²¹ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, November 7, 10 and 18, 1790, RA, Gallica vol. 474; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 177–180.

was a strong opponent of any foreign intervention and believed that France should resolve all its internal problems on its own.

At the end of November 1790 Louis XVI made changes in the ministry as proposed by La Fayette. The king had to bend his will but he accepted the candidates recommended by the marquis. Yet, he was convinced that the constitution, which guaranteed him a free choice of ministers, was violated. Thus, he never forgave the marquis his ambiguous attitude during the cabinet crisis²². Staël von Holstein noted that Louis XVI did not want to give the people's party even the slightest reason for discontent. As for the new ministers, the ambassador emphasised that Louis Duportail, an honoured man and a strong supporter of law and order being restored in the country, was nominated the Minister of War. Staël criticised the Minister of Justice, though. In his opinion, the new Keeper of the Seals, Marguerite Louis Duport-Dutertre, was well known for his revolutionary zeal. In the past he worked as a private Secretary of Adrien Duport, then as a clerk at a law firm. He was finally affiliated to the Bar but he revealed no talents as a lawyer. Finally, Duport-Dutertre was appointed a deputy trustee of the Commune of Paris. From that post he was elevated to the first office in France. The ambassador was outraged at the pace and scale of that stunning career. The same message included information that almost all bishops protested against the decree of November 27, 1790 that imposed an obligation that priests should make an oath of allegiance to the constitution; otherwise, they could not offer their service to people. Staël commented on it that the most important events, which in other circumstances would shock the public opinion, aroused only minor interest. However, the ambassador was definitely wrong this time. The decree on the oath was to increase tensions in the country and lead to further disturbances in the future. As for the imperial intervention in Belgium, which was invaded by the Austrian army on November 22, 1790, Staël predicted the imminent collapse of Brussels. On that occasion, he proved to be a determined legalist. He was convinced that when rightful rulers finally regained control of that country, French democrats would lower their exorbitant demands as well. On December 2 Staël wrote that French matters had further complicated and it was hard to predict in what direction they would develop in the future. In his opinion, the king remained indifferent towards the assembly's attempts to lower crown's prerogatives. On the other hand, the queen showed courage and patience. Therefore, the ambassador wished that she refrained from too radical moves and gave the enemies no reason to put forward new accusations against the court. The same message contained extremely important information for the Swedish king. Staël wrote that people well informed about the situation at court believed

²² See A. Mathiez, *Rewolucja...*, pp. 146–147.

that the king and the queen were ready to leave Paris at the first opportunity. Yet, the ambassador thought that the escape plan of the royal family was highly dangerous and impossible to implement. Gustav III must also have been interested in the results of Staël's conversation with Jan Potocki who was described in the message as one of those Poles who had contributed the most to shaking off the Russian yoke. Potocki spoke of the Swedish king with a great enthusiasm and claimed that the Republic of Poland was grateful for what he had done for it. He was also convinced that the Poles, who highly appreciated Gustav III, would like his brother, Charles, Duke of Södermanland, to be chosen the future ruler of Poland²³.

On December 9, 1790 Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein wrote that it was said in Paris that the court had won the Count of Mirabeau's support. The ambassador was convinced, however, that the court would not be able to hold the new "prey" in hands for a longer time. A week later Staël informed Gustav III that the discussions over the court's clandestine departure from Paris had intensified. At that time, he also wrote about riots that took place in different parts of France. The rebellion in Quercy was started by Mr de Limon who headed the unit of 4,5 thousand people. According to Staël, Lyon, Metz and several other villages were rebellious as well. He believed that the princes who were staying in Turin had greatly contributed to that unrest. The forces of emigration increased as new refugees from the French nobility and aristocracy were arriving at the capital of Piedmont every day. The rumour had it that there were 800 volunteers in Paris who were to accompany the king in his escape. Staël did not believe in it. He wrote, however, that the leaders of the people's party were deeply concerned with the prospect of the king secretly escaping from the capital, especially as the Austrian army had succeeded in Belgium. The ambassador was convinced that only the party of Orléans could benefit from Louis XVI's departure and he did not want it to happen. He believed that the king should remain in Paris. He thought that a cooperation with the National Assembly would be more beneficial than the king's escape which could put both, himself and the future of the monarchy in a great danger. Staël von Holstein also believed that the further decline in La Fayette's popularity could have negative consequences for the future of France. The ambassador was seriously worried by the fact that increasingly more people were leaving Paris. He even claimed that if it was to continue, a special decree prohibiting the issuance of passports would be adopted. In his message dated December 19, 1790 Staël von Holstein once

²³ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, November 28 and December 2, 1790, RA, Gallica vol. 474; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 180–181. For the assembly's decree of November 27, 1790 see A. Mathiez, *Rewolucja...*, p. 139. For the Austrian troops' intervention in Belgium see *ibidem*, p. 148.

again referred to the rumour that the aristocrats were to make great efforts to organise a counterrevolution. The ambassador predicted once again that it would not bring the expected results and would only deepen the court's problems. The same was thought at the court. Louis XVI was said to have written to the Count of Artois and the Prince of Condé as to dissuade them from invading France. According to Staël, the court's action was late because both princes had already left Turin. Yet, he believed that the royal letter ultimately convinced the emigrants of the necessity to give up their earlier plans. In the same message, the Swedish diplomat wrote that France was looking forward to the pope's response on the assembly's request to sanction the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. In his opinion, if the pope was to refuse, the schism in the French Church would be inevitable. Staël predicted it would cause an increase of the social tension in France. He was convinced that the assembly would try to impose their decree by force and thus the majority of the clergy would take the court's side in the conflict as the latter one was unwilling of any changes in the church. Finally, the ambassador informed Stockholm that Marie Antoinette had been secretly corresponding with the Count of Mirabeau for several months. As he disliked the latter, he stated that such a correspondence "would undoubtedly be used by this great criminal whose main principle is to act only in accordance with self-interest and who faces contempt that surrounds him in the way the courageous people face death"²⁴.

Staël von Holstein almost entirely devoted his last December messages to the internal situation in France. He wrote that the Count of Mirabeau's readiness to departure from Paris firstly aroused a great interest and soon caused a public concern. Different, usually exceptive, assumptions were made. Some thought that the count wanted to go to the province, start there a fire of disorder and make a civil war break out. Others claimed that he decided to leave Paris as not to be there at the time of a disaster that could be much more dangerous to him than to the others. Staël refrained from expressing his opinion and concluded that one should patiently wait for further developments. Then, he informed Gustav III that an envoy of Louis XVI had returned from Turin where he probably was to make the Count of Artois fall out with the Prince of Condé. There was a widespread belief in Paris that Marie Antoinette did not want to have any obligations to the Count of Artois whom she regarded as her mortal enemy. Therefore, the queen warned the count that Louis XVI would disavow all his actions if he aimed at overthrowing the current constitution. Gustav III's ambassador also learnt that Marie

²⁴ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, December 9, 16 and 19, 1790, RA, Gallica vol. 474; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 181–184. See also N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, pp. 24–25; A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige...*, pp. 213–214.

Antoinette had secretly negotiated with the Lameth's ladies. Although he could not say anything more about it, he believed that there was no possibility of the court coming to terms with a group which had caused so much troubles to the king and had always worked to his disadvantage. Staël, who was well aware of recent events on the French political scene, came to the conclusion that the court was too weak to guide the revolution and thus had no choice but to wait for further developments. He welcomed the king's disapproval of so-called Lyon's conspiracy that was the French expatriates' initiative. The Swedish diplomat also approved of Louis XVI's decision on accepting a decree requiring the clergy to swear an oath of loyalty to the constitution. He was wrong that time, though. The king did everything to pretend that his approval of the decree had been forced upon him. He was hostile towards the assembly's decree on the clergy as at his court only the unsworn priests were conducting religious service. In reality, his tactics (already started in October 1790) was to dull the revolutionists' vigilance by an apparent consent to their wishes. At the end of December 1790, contrary to Staël von Holstein's beliefs, Louis XVI was far from coming to terms with the revolution and he certainly did not want to passively submit to current events²⁵.

THE GROWING ANXIETY: THE SITUATION IN FRANCE FROM JANUARY TO MAY 1791

Messages written by Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein in January 1791 mainly contained information on the French political clubs. The Swedish diplomat mostly described the activity of the Jacobin Club but he also mentioned that the club of the Friends of the Monarchical Constitution emerged on the political scene. Although the ambassador sympathised with the latter, he concluded that "among disasters that hit the country, this kind of clubs is not the least of all evils". Staël wrote about increasing economic difficulties in France as well. He was worried about the executive power's weakness and an unresolved issue of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. He claimed that as long as that issue was not settled anything could happen. He also wrongly concluded that the manorial party did not intend to take any counterrevolutionary steps in the near future. The rumour had it that there was the possibility of a foreign intervention to restore Louis XVI's lost power. Yet, the Swedish diplomat regretted that none of the powers which could possibly intervene in France (Austria, Spain, England or Sardinia) was a friend of France. For Staël all those considerations were purely hypothetical, though. In his opinion, the King of France must have had Gustav III's talents

²⁵ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, December 23 and 30, 1790, RA, Gallica vol. 474; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 184–186. See also A. Mathiez, *Rewolucja...*, p. 147.

or at least had to ask such a devoted friend as a ruler of Sweden for support if a foreign intervention was to make any sense. However, deep in his heart, the ambassador opposed to such a solution and believed that all attempts of a foreign intervention in France would be doomed to failure. As for an old issue concerning a change of Louis XVI's title from "the King of France and Navarre" to "the King of the French" (the change had been already made in October 1789 but Gustav III consistently refused to accept it), Staël von Holstein informed his ruler that Montmorin had not yet demanded from him new credentials which included that change. Therefore, he advised the king not to mention that issue and calmly wait for further developments. The ambassador supposed that the National Assembly would be unwilling to renew old relations with the court of Stockholm. Still, he intended to have room for future negotiations and, thus, did not want an open conflict which would be inevitable if Gustav III was to refuse to send him new credentials. At the same time the Swedish ambassador, in accordance with orders of his court became more friendly with his former enemy, the Russian envoy to Paris, Ivan M. Simolin²⁶.

At the end of January 1791 Staël von Holstein was informed that Gustav III would try to obtain the Polish crown. He immediately had another meeting with Jan Potocki. He learnt from him that the Polish minister, who was sent by the king and estates of the Republic of Poland to the Spanish court, would arrive to Paris soon. On his way he was to visit Dresden and therefore when he came to the French capital he should already know whether the Elector of Saxony would accept or reject the crown proposed to him. Potocki supposed that if Frederick Augustus III rejected the offer to take the Polish throne, the court of Berlin would support the candidature of Charles William Ferdinand, Duke von Brunswick. In his opinion, it was less likely that the latter would obtain the Polish crown, especially as the Duke of Södermanland was better known in Poland thanks to his successes in the last war. During that conversation, Staël noted that if the Polish nobility appreciated military talents, also Gustav III was an outstanding soldier. What is more, if he was chosen the king, the Republic of Poland would become independent from Prussia, as two crowns would form a permanent union. The ambassador wanted to know whether Potocki shared his view. The Swedish diplomat was satisfied with the Pole's reply. Yet, the Polish aristocrat had objections to the fact that during the last session of the Parliament (*Riksdag*) the king had supported the third estate against the nobility. Potocki was afraid that it might frighten the Polish nobility. He received an answer that the king's action was due to special circumstances, not the political system. The king's

²⁶ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, January 2, 6 and 13, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 475; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 187–190. See also N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

authority and the whole nobility would be lost if Gustav III did not act in that way. Perhaps a revolution similar to the French one would have broken out in Sweden, as the previous had started in almost identical circumstances. Thus, the king's coup d'état had prevented the overthrow of his throne, the collapse of the nobility and the ruin of the whole kingdom. His generosity was proved by his benevolence towards the defeated nobility. The king attached great importance to the inalienable rights of the nobility as well as the functioning of the intermediary bodies without which there could be no monarchy. Potocki seemed to be convinced by Staël's arguments and promised to write a letter to his brother to get support for the Swedish king's candidature in case the Elector of Saxony refused to accept the Polish crown. Finally, Potocki surprised his interlocutor with the question whether he had been ordered to talk with him on the matter. He received a negative answer which of course was not true. Both men agreed to restart their discussion when they would know more about the decision of the Elector of Saxony. On January 30, 1791 Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein wrote that Potocki feared the negative answer of the elector, which would cause him much pain. Yet, he believed that nothing would be more beneficial for his country than an implementation of the project presented to him by the Swedish diplomat. Had the elector refused the Polish crown, Potocki would do everything to obtain it for the Swedish king. The Polish aristocrat asked for discretion, though. If other Polish aristocratic families learnt that his family was seeking the support for Gustav III, all his actions could be thwarted. Potocki advised to keep the whole thing secret until he gained for the Swedish king support big enough to not to fear anything. On February 6, 1791 Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein informed Gustav III that Tadeusz Morski, the Polish Minister to the Spanish court, had arrived to Paris. Morski informed Potocki that the Elector of Saxony intended to adopt the Polish crown. Yet, Staël was not sure whether it was true as he had not spoken with an ill diplomat himself. Thus, he tried to inquire Potocki. He did it in such a way as not to arouse even the slightest suspicion that he had received orders from Stockholm on how to talk with the Polish aristocrat. Although the ambassador did not seem to support Gustav III's idea of obtaining the Polish crown, he still wished him to bring his "great and wonderful project" to a successful end²⁷.

In his next message, Staël von Holstein urged the king to invite to Sweden those Frenchmen who had recently decided to leave their country. There were many rich merchants and skilled artisans among the emigrants. The ambassador wrote that there was no need to fear an inflow of dangerous ideas to Sweden, as immigrants, unlike most of their countrymen, were

²⁷ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, January 23, 30 and February 6, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 475; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 190–193.

not mad and would not like to repeat what they had witnessed in France. On March 10, 1791 Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein gave his opinion on the current international situation. There was a widespread belief in Paris that Catherine was ready for a war with England and Prussia if they decided to defend Turkey. The English who were staying at the French capital believed that William Pitt's government would support the sultan if he only started another military campaign. Staël, however, was pretty certain that the Triple Alliance countries would not risk an open conflict with Russia in Turkey's defence. The ambassador, despite all his objections to the court of London's policy, still believed in the possibility of the strengthening of the Swedish-English relations. He was less enthusiastic about the possibility of Stockholm's agreement with the St. Petersburg court. He also warned Gustav III that the Empress of Russia had not forgotten that she had trembled before his army in her capital. He reminded the king that for the past three years he had not let the Russian fleet sail at the Mediterranean Sea where the empress could have achieved great victories. In his next message, Staël von Holstein wrote that the implementation of the provisions of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy and the execution of a decree concerning it would certainly torment France. Yet, he was convinced that the weakness of the aristocratic party would not change the course of events unless foreign powers interfered in the internal affairs of the country. The latter possibility seemed more and more real to the Swedish diplomat. He anxiously wrote that the emperor had allowed the Prince of Condé to form in Alsace a military unit composed of French expatriates. Staël was convinced that if immigrants entered France, it would seriously threaten the safety of the royal family. Parisians would violently react in the capital and it would be difficult to predict the size of misfortunes. The ambassador was not probably aware of the fact that his words had reassured Gustav III of the need to organise Louis XVI's escape from Paris. On March 24, 1791 Staël von Holstein informed the court of Stockholm about the pope's negative answer to the National Assembly's request on sanctioning the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. The ambassador wrote that the pope had strongly condemned both, the constitution and the decree on the clergy oath's to it. Yet, Staël concluded that the pope's decision would not cause any new schism in the French Church. In his last March message the ambassador wrote about the growing interest of the European public opinion in the French events. In many capitals the rumour had it that there was the possibility of a counterrevolution in that country. According to Staël, those assumptions were not justified because there was no sign that it would be possible to attempt any action against the revolutionary order. Therefore, the ambassador tried to dissuade his lord from engaging in any event of a similar nature. In the same message Staël

informed Stockholm that Charles François Hurault, Viscount of Vibraye was appointed a new Ambassador to Sweden²⁸.

On April 2, 1791 the Count of Mirabeau unexpectedly died. The very next day Staël von Holstein sent to Stockholm a courier with an announcement of his death. It was an event of a great importance for the balance of power on the French political scene. The ambassador, who never liked Mirabeau, could not unambiguously judge the consequences of that death. He wrote to Gustav III that it could be considered as a happy twist of fate. On the other hand, the count had a secret agreement with the court which he was working for. The extraordinary strength of his mind had also made him most terrible enemy of the Jacobins. Thus, the leaders of that party were the only ones who did not regret his death. Everybody else was truly upset by it. On that occasion, Staël emphasised that the French had easily forgotten Mirabeau's faults and mourned him as a failed saviour of their country. According to the Swedish diplomat, the count had done many evil things in his life and many people wished he had been never born. Yet, because of his own fate and the destiny of France, he had passed away before he could rectify his misdeeds. He died when the honest people started to have high hopes of him. He showed the great courage until the last moment of his life. He continuously repeated that the monarchy would be entombed with him. Maybe it was his nature that told him to boast until the very end. Yet, he also might have been convinced that the Jacobin Club was a real threat for the monarchy. The ambassador did not seem to share the count's view on the future fate of the monarchy. He noted, however, that the death of Mirabeau had consternated both, the government and the royal court. Their political plans were based on the extraordinary talents of that man who was able to think, speak and act in all circumstances. The only hope of the ministry and the court was to obtain the support of Mirabeau's followers in the National Assembly. Yet, Staël predicted that if it failed, if the number did not replace a great talent, France would be a democratic country. In the same message, the Swedish diplomat wrote that there was a widespread belief among the common people that Mirabeau had been poisoned. However, he informed Gustav III that the Count of La Marck, the executor of the last will of the deceased, was with Mirabeau until his last minute and assured everyone that the cause of Mirabeau's death was natural²⁹.

²⁸ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, February 10 and March 10, 17, 24 and 31, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 475; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 194–197. For more information on the pope's attitude towards the reform of the French Church see A. Mathiez, *Rewolucja...*, pp. 137–138; L. Villat, *op. cit.*, pp. 109–110.

²⁹ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, April 3, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 475; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 197–198. See also N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, p. 37; L. Villat, *op. cit.*, p. 111; J. Baszkiewicz, *Ludwik XVI*, Wrocław 1983, p. 230.

In his next messages, Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein wrote to Gustav III that inhabitants of Paris wondered what steps Sweden would take if a war between Russia and the Triple Alliance countries broke out. He also wrote that the rumour had it that the Swedish king intended to go to Spa. He hoped that he would finally have occasion to see his ruler. He was also convinced that the republican ideas would be established in France as he informed the court of Stockholm about the assembly's decree that allowed deputies to accept posts in the government only when their term of office had ended at least four years earlier. At the same time, another rumour had it that there was the possibility of a foreign intervention in the French internal affairs. It was undoubtedly related to the supposed arrival of Leopold II to Brussels. Staël meticulously recorded that digression. He also informed Stockholm that the Holy See intended to regard all newly elected French bishops as schismatics and did not hesitate to condemn those hierarchs who would ordain them. Finally, on April 21, 1791 Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein described tumultuous events that took place in Paris on April 18. In his opinion, that day was of a greater importance for the revolution than July 14, 1789. An unfortunate decision of Louis XVI, who decided to spend Easter holidays in Saint-Cloud, started those turbulences. On Great Monday, April 18, 1791, he intended to set off with the family to his mansion near Paris. The rumour had it that the king was escaping. A crowd gathered before the Tuileries. There were those residents of the capital who for a long time had been anxiously observing the court's actions and strongly opposed to the king's support for the unsworn priests. The crowd was hostile and aggressive from the beginning. The members of the National Guard joined it and bared the king's way. La Fayette suggested that he would pave the way for the king by force and asked for necessary orders. The answer of Louis XVI was contemptuously ironic: "It should be you to assess what needs to be done to ensure the execution of your constitution". The crowd cursed and elbowed the courtiers who had surrounded the royal carriage. La Fayette tried to speak out but even the members of the National Guard did not follow his orders. The royal *maître d'hôtel*, Mr Louis Georges de Gougenot, was almost lynched by the mob. The king and the queen were verbally insulted. Louis wrote later that "His Majesty endured those insults for an hour and three-quarters; finally, he had to give up and returned to his prison, as his palace could not have been called otherwise ever since". Staël von Holstein emphasised that the king had provoked those events as at court he was surrounded by the unsworn priests and thus he was clearly violating the law he had sanctioned himself. The Swedish diplomat described the whole event in details. He wrote that La Fayette ordered three times to let the king in but his orders were not followed. The king was waiting 1,5 hour in his carriage and then returned to his

palace as he did not want the bloodshed. The queen turned to the guardians and said what follows: "At least you will not be able to claim that we are free". Staël von Holstein was outraged at the way the royal family had been treated. Like many other observers of the French political scene he expected La Fayette's resignation. He was shocked that the National Assembly did nothing to punish those who had offended the royal majesty. He only hoped that a situation in the capital would be settled after the announcement that meetings of the assembly would take place in another city. Staël once again emphasised the king's weakness and wrote that General François Claude de Bouillé, the only hope of honest people, was in Metz and was unable to help Louis XVI. The ambassador also mentioned a plan, supposedly prepared by Mirabeau and the Marquis of Bouillé, which envisaged the king's departure from Paris and the convening of the assembly in another city. The death of Mirabeau, however, was to cross out those projects. According to the ambassador, the Duke of Orléans was to be blamed for the recent unrest. In Staël's opinion, the party of the Orléans' idea to preserve the monarchy but without all king's prerogatives was very dangerous as well. According to him, the only way out of that difficult situation would be an alliance between the court and the democrats against the party of the Orléans. Yet, the Swedish ambassador was strongly opposed to the use of force in the competition for power in France. He also disfavoured the idea of a foreign intervention and clearly disapproved of hostile actions of the Count of Artois and the Prince of Condé. Such an attitude could not suit his king's taste³⁰.

The events of April 18 had not yet ended, though. Parisian revolutionaries demanded from the king to dismiss the unsworn priests and announce to Europe that he approved of the new French constitution of his own free will. However, Louis XVI insisted on going to Saint-Cloud and on April 19 he appeared at the National Constituent Assembly. He explained there that if he did not leave, the freedom of his movements and decisions would be doubted. Yet, he was coldly received by the deputies. Thus, the king agreed on some concessions. He dismissed the most unpopular courtiers and the unsworn priests. On Holy Saturday, April 23, 1791, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Montmorin, read in the assembly the king's letter to French ambassadors at foreign courts. Louis XVI announced in it that he approved of the new French constitution of his own free will and wanted European monarchs to be informed about it. At Easter the king went to his parish church of Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois and listened to the Mass celebrated by a sworn priest. Parisians were satisfied with their ruler's conduct. It was said that

³⁰ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, April 10, 17 and 21, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 475; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 198–201. For more information on the events of April 18, 1791 see J. Baszkiewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 234; M. Reinhard, *La chute de la Royauté. 10 août 1792*, Paris 1969, p. 449.

his letter to the ambassadors was “the last rites of the aristocracy” and “the nail in the coffin of the counterrevolution”. Louis XVI assumed that all European monarchs would realise that his letter to the ambassadors had been forced on him. The representative of the court of Stockholm was of the same opinion. In his message written on Easter Sunday, April 24, 1791, Staël von Holstein tried to convince Gustav III that a situation in France was more dangerous than few days earlier. Although Louis XVI was allowed to go to his parish church, the monarch was not free. New instructions to French envoys staying abroad were sent. They had never been as contradictory to the king's wishes as for the time being. According to Staël, the king decided to wait for further course of events and came to terms with the people's party as to save his throne and life. The ambassador was convinced that on April 18 Louis XVI's life was actually threatened. Staël also informed Stockholm that the reform of the National Guard was planned in order to make it more well-disciplined. So far soldiers-citizens had been convinced that they had right to think over orders of their commanders. At the end of April Staël received (through Hans Axel von Fersen) Gustav III's order to try to delay a departure of the new French Ambassador to Stockholm. Staël did not find it difficult, as in his opinion Vibraye was to remain in Paris for at least two months. In the same message, the ambassador wrote that supporters of the revolution believed that they had achieved a great victory when they had made the king sign Montmorin's circular letter of April 23. They were convinced that now foreign powers should no longer interfere in the internal affairs of France. In Staël's opinion, they were wrong. He was convinced that the circular letter to French diplomatic missions would have no result. According to the ambassador, Louis XVI signed the circular letter only to save his family from the impending danger. Staël believed that the King of France had lost his freedom as his departure to Saint-Cloud was impeded. The Swedish diplomat was also concerned with the growing importance of the republican party on the French political scene. On May 1, 1791 he informed his king that the Jacobins were feeding common people's discontent, as they had accused La Fayette of despotic aspirations and supported actions of the members of the National Guard who had refused to follow orders during the April disturbances. Staël also wrote about representatives of the moderate wing of the revolution who appealed for the unification of all forces in the face of a foreign intervention that threatened France³¹.

³¹ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, April 24, 28 and May 1, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 476; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 201–203. For more information on the circular letter to the French diplomats and the king's visit to the National Constituent Assembly see J. Baszkiewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 235; J. Baszkiewicz, S. Meller, *Rewolucja francuska 1789–1794. Społeczeństwo obywatelskie*, Warszawa 1983, p. 267. Interestingly, Louis XVI officially informed the Stockholm court about the replacement of the Marquis of Pons by the Viscount of Vibraye at the post

In his messages from the second half of May 1791 Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein wrote about the growing tension between Rome and Paris. In his opinion, relations between both capitals had recently worsened because the pope refused to accept the Count of Ségur as a new French Ambassador to the Eternal City. Interestingly, Gustav III supported Rome in the conflict and his ambassador intervened in the French ministry to meet the pope's needs. The Swedish diplomat also wrote that the French Minister of Foreign Affairs had changed. According to his information, Montmorin was replaced by Marie Gabriel, Count of Choiseul-Gouffier. Staël also commented that the counterrevolution would not break out until July. In his opinion, the aristocratic party, which had long been the cause of all Louis XVI's troubles, was weak, hesitant and unable to provoke large-scale riots. On May 26 Staël informed the court of Stockholm that the news about an adoption of the Constitution of May 3 in Warsaw reached Paris. He wrote that the revolution in Poland shocked the French capital. Local public opinion admired wisdom and patriotism of its leaders. Staël described the noble attitude of Stanisław August. He was convinced that his generous behaviour would guarantee him love and appreciation of all true friends of the human race. Although Gustav III did not share the enthusiasm of his ambassador, it may be assumed that he remained rather indifferent towards those news. He was much more interested in other Staël von Holstein's reports, like the news that the Count of Artois had gone to Spa. The ambassador's opinion on the current political situation was equally interesting for the ruler of Sweden. On May 30 Staël wrote that he was doing everything in his power to delay the trip of the Viscount of Vibraye. He also informed his king about a growing number of libels against the queen, which had always been the signs of the coming trouble. He advised his monarch against cooperating with the aristocratic party. He also warned him against the emigrants, especially the Prince of Condé, who had been always very ambitious and had long belonged to a group of declared enemies of the queen³². Apparently, the ambassador was not aware of Gustav III's plans. Nor did he have any idea what surprise his enemy, Hans Axel, Count von Fersen, had prepared for the inhabitants of Paris. As Staël von Holstein was not a *persona grata* at the French court, he could only guess what would be Louis XVI's attitude towards the recent events.

of the Ambassador to Stockholm as late as May 10, 1791. What is even more surprising, the letter was addressed not to Gustav III but to his wife. See Louis XVI to Sophia Magdalena, Paris, May 10, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 520.

³² See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, May 15, 22, 26 and 30, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 476; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 204–206. See also N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

LOUIS XVI AND THE KING'S FIRST ATTEMPTS TO LEAVE PARIS

There are no doubts today as to the fact that, from the very beginning, Louis XVI disapproved of a new revolutionary order in France. Moreover, never did he intend to acknowledge either the political changes introduced by the National Constituent Assembly or the limits set upon his absolute power. It was as early as in October 1789 that he commenced his first endeavours to win foreign courts so as to support his idea of an armed intervention in France. However, since both, Emperor Leopold II and King of Spain, Charles IV, felt sceptical about Louis XVI's proposal, the latter one was forced to take up the (purely tactical) co-operation with the group of moderate revolutionaries concentrated around Marie Joseph, Marquis of La Fayette. On the other hand, the marquis made himself unpopular with the king during the cabinet crisis of October 1790. Although Louis XVI accepted the ministers La Fayette foisted on him, yet, he had never forgiven the marquis neither his ambiguous attitude nor breaking the constitutional rules (officially, the king had the exclusive right to nominate ministers). Thus, in the autumn of 1790 the king converted into a counterrevolutionary. On October 20 he received one of the first emigrants, Charles d'Agoult, a former Bishop of Pamiers, sent by Louis Auguste, Baron of Breteuil, residing in Switzerland, to encourage the king to take more decisive steps against the revolution. The most trustworthy envoy of all former royal ministers brought with him a lengthy memorial by means of which the baron offered his services to the court and presented a plan of an action reinstating the strong position of a monarch in France. Breteuil's memorial awoke the king's interest to such a degree that as early as November 20, 1790 the latter one handed to Monsieur d'Agoult a proxy for the baron allowing him to negotiate with foreign courts in order to make them intervene as regards restoration of the monarch's power. Furthermore, following the advice of his former minister, the king almost immediately applied the tactics of himself seemingly approving of the revolution; yet, he never did anything to facilitate the application of the new constitution. On the contrary, he attempted to multiply the obstacles and make life difficult for both, his own ministers and representatives of the National Assembly. However, he never encouraged an overt rebellion against the new deal. He also condemned actions taken up by his own brother, Charles, Count of Artois, and other emigrants. That was so for Louis XVI hoped with all his heart for a collective royal intervention supported by armed demonstrations of the latter's military forces. This was the direction the Baron of Breteuil took as well as he attempted to establish a monarch league including top European powers whose aim

would have been to restore the old order in France³³. Since the visit of the former Bishop of Pamiers, Louis XVI was more inclined to leave Paris and find shelter in a safer, more distant from the capital place.

The possibility of arranging the royal family's escape from Paris had been discussed at court since the first weeks after the enforced move from Versailles to the Tuileries. Various plans and ideas were at stake at that time. As early as October 1789, François Emmanuel, Count of Saint-Priest, a former royal minister, urged the king to leave for Rambouillet. At the same time, one of the most influential deputies of the National Constituent Assembly, Honoré Gabriel, Count of Mirabeau, who was also of an option that the king had to leave Paris, began to search for contacts with the court. One of the first plots making the king enabled to leave the capital comprised the conspiracy of Thomas, Marquis (unlawful title) of Favras. Under the pretext of helping revolutionary Duchy of Brabant, he was to gather a big group of ready for everything brawlers and, with their help, murder La Fayette, the commander of the Paris National Guard; Bailly, the Mayor of Paris; and Necker, the Minister of Finance. Next, the king was to be "kidnapped" and transported to Péronne, which was said to be the safe place for him. The entire plot was animated by Louis, Count of Provence, who supported the revolution; yet, the Count of Mirabeau lingered at the plot's backstage. The king's brother must have counted on evoking chaos or triggering of some political vacuum, the fact that would give him a chance to take office of the regency. Unfortunately, a partner of Favras gave the latter one away when he was about to receive money for the undertaking. He was carrying a letter discrediting the Count of Provence. Still, La Fayette acted knightly by having returned the letter to its author and keeping the entire incident in secret. During the investigation, Favras denied everything thus saving other people from becoming entangled in the abduction-to-be of Louis XVI. Some claimed that he did not want to give away the Count of Provence as it was considered inappropriate for a nobleman to bring the king's brother to ruin. The others were of the opinion that Favras counted on the help of the count and the act of mercy granted by the king. Although Favras went to great lengths to prolong the execution in the false hope that the letter from the king saving his life would be delivered, being sentenced to death by hanging, he died in February 1790³⁴.

³³ See A. Mathiez, *Rewolucja...*, pp. 82, 90, 146–148. The contents of the proxy for the Baron of Breteuil issued in Paris on November 20, 1790 see Ludwik Filip, *Pamiętniki z czasów Wielkiej Rewolucji*, W. Dłuski, J. Baszkiewicz (eds), Warszawa 1988, p. 481. For more information on the Baron of Breteuil's role in the secret diplomacy of the King of France see M. Price, *Louis XVI and Gustavus III: Secret Diplomacy and Counter-Revolution 1791–1792*, "The Historical Journal", vol. XLII, No. 2, 1999, pp. 434–435 and fol.

³⁴ See H.A. Barton, *Count Hans Axel von Fersen. Aristocrat in an Age of Revolution*, Boston 1975, pp. 96–97; J. Baszkiewicz, S. Meller, *op. cit.*, pp. 265–266; A. Mathiez, *Rewolucja...*, p. 83.

Marie Antoinette opted for the escape of the royal family from Paris. She was supposed to tell her friend, Jeanne Louise de Campan: "But we will have to escape: who knows to what lengths can rebels go. Jeopardy is becoming more real every day". The king's sister, Madame Elisabeth, supported the idea of leaving Paris, too. In her letters to her friends, Madame de Bombelles and Madame de Raigecourt, who had emigrated, she oftentimes mentioned the intention of arranging a royal escape from the capital. However, there was a difference between the queen's projects and the sister's ideas. Madame Elisabeth warmly supported emigrants' actions, the king's younger brother, the Count of Artois, and Louis Joseph, Prince of Condé included. It was with the latter one that the king's escape and his further political action was to be agreed. The queen's opinion was entirely opposite. Marie Antoinette told Madame de Campan: "If emigrants succeed, they will long be dictating their will; nothing will be there to refuse them; to owe them a crown is to owe them a too dear debt". Emigrants advised the king to escape to Lyon, which seemed a predictable move. In 1790, Turin was the capital of emigrants whose counterrevolutionary plans concentrated around the south-eastern part of France. The Count of Mirabeau (won by the court in June of 1790) advised escaping to Rouen. Situated far away from Paris, the town was also distant from the border, the fact that would also exclude a possible accusation of the king willing to leave France. Still, Louis XVI lost a fine occasion to escape. In the summer of 1790 the royal family left humid and stuffy Tuileries for the royal palace in Saint Cloud. The latter place proved to be easier to escape from than Paris did. One could just use any forthcoming occasion such as a walk, excursion or hunting event. For example, Count Valentin Esterhazy wrote in his diary when, one day, while hunting, the king went far beyond the limits of Saint Cloud. Both, Esterhazy and the other courtier, Louis Hercule, Duke of Brissac, were convinced that the long-awaited escape had just begun. Allegedly, the two of them agreed that they would stab with their daggers the two national guard officers accompanying them when, suddenly, the king gave a signal to return. Similarly, Madame de Campan described the ease with which one could escape from Saint Cloud and the lingering atmosphere of expectation for this moment³⁵.

However, the hopes that the court expressed in the summer of 1790 proved groundless. King Louis XVI began seriously considering his escaping from Paris as late as October 1790. At the time he got acquainted with the memorial prepared by the Baron of Breteuil who opted for the escape to comprise an elaborate political operation. In the baron's opinion, the king should leave the capital for one of the fortresses situated in the east of the country

³⁵ See A. Söderhjelm, *Fersen...*, p. 146; J. Baszkiewicz, S. Meller, *op. cit.*, pp. 266–267; J. Godechot, *La contre-révolution française. Doctrine et action. 1789–1804*, Paris 1961, p. 163.

where he would be protected by the army under a loyal, royalist general, François Claude, Marquis of Bouillé. Military attacks of the emperor's army on the eastern border of France were to accompany Louis XVI's departure from the capital. Consequently, the General de Bouillé would be ordered to concentrate his army and the king would apply to his army to support him in his negotiations with the emperor which would result in the latter's withdrawing his troops, the operation which would place the king in the position of a nation's saviour on his ultimate, triumphant return to Paris. Marie Antoinette was enthusiastic about Breteuil's memorial. So was King Louis XVI who, though hesitant at first, eventually accepted the plan of escaping from Paris. Thus, as early as October 1790, the conspirators commenced the operation. At the end of the month, in Metz, Charles d'Agoult presented the General de Bouillé with Breteuil's plan. Later, the marquis established a contact with the emperor asking the latter one to move his Austrian troops towards the French border. For the time being, he did not receive a satisfactory reply. In December 1790, the Count of Mirabeau, who always supported the idea of the king's escape from Paris, was informed about the royal plan. Still, his advice for the king was to find shelter within the country. Meanwhile, the rumour about Louis XVI's intended escape was spreading around the whole kingdom, in particular among emigration circles and counterrevolutionary clubs. Preparations for the escape became a hot issue in the Tuileries as well. Starting from December 1790, democratic dailies such as "L'Ami du Peuple" edited by Jean Paul Marat as well as "Révolutions de Paris" edited by Louis Marie Prudhomme overtly alluded to the king's escape. This was so since numerous members of Louis XVI's entourage worked as informers for the mass media hostile towards the royal family. Later on, Madame de Campan wrote in her diaries that in the Tuileries Palace people carelessly "chattered at the table paying no attention to the fact that all butlers were at the service of the hostile party"³⁶.

A TRUSTED FRIEND: HANS AXEL VON FERSEN AND HIS ROLE IN PREPARATIONS FOR THE ROYAL FAMILY'S ESCAPE

One of the closest to the French royal couple was a trusted correspondent of Swedish King Gustav III, a distinguished military man and a diplomat, Hans Axel, Count von Fersen. He supported the idea of Louis XVI's departure from Paris from the very beginning. In his letter to the Swedish king dated January 7, 1790 Fersen expressed an opinion that restoration of the old order in France would be impossible as long as the king did not leave the capital.

³⁶ See H.A. Barton, *op. cit.*, pp. 98–99; J. Baszkiewicz, S. Meller, *op. cit.*, p. 267; A. Mathiez, *Rewolucja...*, p. 149.

He returned to the problem several months later. On September 5, 1790, in his letter to Gustav III's close informer, General Evert Taube, Fersen again pointed out that numerous members of Louis XVI's entourage were of an opinion that the king should leave Paris as quickly as possible. Still, it seems that Fersen got directly involved in the preparations of the royal escape as late as the end of October 1790 when he permanently left Auteil, the place where his regiment Royal Suédois stationed, for Paris. In November and December that year the count oftentimes stayed at court, which is when he got initiated into the affair. In December 1790 he initiated his first contact with the General de Bouillé. In the same month he began his preparations to arrange for the royal family's escape from Paris. Fersen fully accepted Breteuil's opinion on the necessity to establish a secret contact with foreign powers. He also agreed to the latter's ideas as regards restoring the old order in France. Very soon did Fersen become one of the most trustworthy trustees of the royal couple at court. He helped Louis XVI in keeping secret diplomatic correspondence as well as he commenced accumulating funds to pay the costs of the intended departure from the capital. However, in practically no time at all, differences in opinions cropped up between Fersen and the Count of Mirabeau. Advising the king to leave Paris, the latter meant strengthening the institution of constitutional monarchy. He also wished for France's all problems to be solved without the participation of the foreign powers. Contrary to him and similarly to the Baron of Breteuil, Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI's opinions, Fersen was regarding the restoration of an absolute monarchy in France. He also claimed that the aim would be attainable only with the help from the outside of the country. That is why he was doing his best not to let the Mirabeau – General de Bouillé's agreement happen since the latter one was the only conspirer that had real power at his disposal. Fersen's pressing upon Louis XVI might have caused the king to have written a letter to the Marquis of Bouillé warning the latter one of the king's reluctance towards the count's plan. That, in turn, determined the unsuccessful mission of Auguste, Count of La Marck whom Mirabeau sent to Metz in February 1791 to sound out the Marquis of Bouillé's opinion. Alas, the general eventually took the side of the court and resolved to tighten his relations with Breteuil and Fersen³⁷.

Meanwhile, the preparations for escaping from Paris were going on. In mid-February 1791 Marie Antoinette wrote a letter to her brother, Emperor Leopold II, informing him about Louis XVI's plans and asking for the emperor's help in executing the undertaking. Simultaneously, at the end of that month, Hans Axel von Fersen notified his own father of having been

³⁷ See H.A. Barton, *op. cit.*, pp. 97, 100–101, 103; A. Söderhjelm, *Fersen...*, pp. 145, 156–157.

let into the biggest secret of Marie Antoinette and King Louis XVI, discreetly mentioning the possibility of the royal couple to leave the capital. On March 7, 1791 Fersen wrote to Evert Taube openly informing him that he was working on the plan of the royal escape from France. He emphasised the fact that, owing to the secret character of the affair, only four Frenchmen knew about it, the three of whom resided outside Paris. He also pointed out that neither the Count of Provence nor the Count of Artois nor the Prince of Condé knew anything about the preparations. On the next day, March 8, 1791, Fersen resolved to inform King Gustav III about everything. In his letter to the Swedish king, he wrote about the Count of Mirabeau's service for the court, pointing out that it is for tactical reasons only that the latter was forced to play a democrat. However, he would do his best to make the revolutionary zeal of both, the assembly and inhabitants of Paris weaken. Relating to the plans he worked on, Fersen wrote that in order to prepare the king's escape, cooperation on the part of France's such neighbouring countries as Spain and Switzerland as well as the emperor would be necessary. At the same time, he feared that England, Prussia or Holland could interfere with other European powers in saving the French king. Thus, he advised Gustav III to make allies with Denmark and Russia as soon as possible in order to mutually keep the Triple Alliance countries in check. Attempting to encourage the Swedish king to cooperate with other powers, Fersen allowed himself a statement that without the mutual effort of all European monarchs, the King of France would never regain his former meaning. He invoked the necessity to suppress the bad example that the French events could be for other nations. According to his standards, monarchs posed natural guarantors of peace and safety, the values that should be fundamental for the entire society. Consequently, the limits set upon Louis XVI's prerogatives proved, for Fersen, to constitute an attempt on the most vital principles of functioning of state structures and the entire French society³⁸. Needless to say, King Gustav III fully shared his diplomat's opinions.

For the time being, the attitude of the court of Stockholm was of little significance as regards the question of Louis XVI's successful escape from Paris. The biggest part of the undertaking's success depended upon a position King Leopold II was to take. However, the latter proved to be sceptical towards the plan of his brother-in-law's escape since he took evasive actions such as promising only his conditional participation in the project and in an indeterminate time. The time was flying and no progress was made in the idle

³⁸ See H.A. v. Fersen to E. Taube, Paris, March 7, 1791, RA, Stafsundsarkivet, Evert Taubes Samling, vol. II; H.A. v. Fersen to Gustav III, Paris, March 8, 1791; A. v. Fersen, *Rescue the Queen. A Diary of the French Revolution 1789–1793* [further on: *Rescue the Queen*], A. Carlsson, E. Elstob (eds), London 1971, pp. 23–24. See also N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, pp. 33–34; H.A. Barton, *op. cit.*, pp. 100–101.

negotiations with the court of Vienna. Therefore, on March 27, 1791 Fersen prepared a memorial for the French royal couple where he was proposing an immediate escape from Paris without waiting for the completion of negotiations with the foreign powers. What is more, he was warning Louis XVI that any further delay in the making of the plan might result in the emigrant troops' marching into France, which, consequently, would expose the royal family to great jeopardy. Yet, on April 1, 1791 Hans Axel von Fersen wrote to Evert Taube that he had been authorised by Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette to present the King of Sweden with the accepted plan of the escape. He also wrote that the King of France's situation was becoming more difficult every day. That is why Louis XVI, having already exhausted all his gentleness and patience with no positive effect, was eventually forced to employ military power in his case. However, being uncertain of his actual possibilities, he resolved to turn towards the foreign courts. According to Fersen, Louis XVI's plan was to secretly leave Paris and join the royal supporters under the Marquis of Bouillé at the northern border of France. Also, Fersen was ensuring Taube that the general had been promised to cooperate on the part of Austria, Spain, Sardinia and Switzerland. The only problem was that both, the emperor and the King of Spain feared the attack of England, Prussia and Holland at the moment they would offer their military support to the King of France. Therefore, the promoters of Louis XVI's escape intended to ask the friendly courts (Sweden included) to insist upon the clear statement of the position of the Triple Alliance countries in that case by means of a firm *démarche*. Fersen ensured Taube that the King of France was ready to negotiate with England and he did not exclude the possibility to make concessions to the court of St. James. Still, were the negotiations to fail, the king would ask Gustav III along with Russia and Denmark to influence the attitude of the court of London and thus force the latter to stay neutral in the case. Continuing the letter, Fersen wrote that Louis XVI was going to leave Paris the latest in two months. Also, he was convincing Taube of the fact that the royal couple was ready to recompense the King of Sweden for all his favours in proportion to the amount of the help obtained to make the plan in question work. The Swedish diplomat assured Taube that as soon as all the preparations for the royal family's departure from Paris were completed, he would immediately send a special envoy to King Gustav III³⁹.

Meanwhile, complications unforeseen by Fersen occurred. On April 2, the Count of Mirabeau died. Fersen considered his death a huge loss for the royal couple and feared it could delay the preparations for leaving Paris. Indeed, the progress of the preparation slowed down. However, on April 18,

³⁹ See H.A. Barton, *op. cit.*, pp. 103–104; A. Mathiez, *Rewolucja...*, p. 149; H.A. v. Fersen to E. Taube, Paris, April 1, 1791, RA, Stafsundsarkivet, Evert Taubes Samling, vol. II.

1791 dangerous riots took place in front of the Tuileries Palace where the agitated mob made the king's departure to Saint Cloud impossible. Indignant, Fersen notified Evert Taube about the news. He also claimed that unknown agitators had instigated the mob to storm the Tuileries, unsuccessfully, though. Still, the events of April 18 turned out decisive for Louis XVI's further lot. On this day, the king ultimately made up his mind as to his departure from the capital. Summoned before the royal couple, Fersen heard from Marie Antoinette that the king depended on him in all. The overt gestures of docility towards the National Assembly on the part of Louis XVI only camouflaged the progressing preparation for the escape. A bright observer of the events then, Madame de Campan, wrote in her diary the following words on the attitude of the royal couple towards what had happened on April 18: "Deep down, they disregarded the insult; in fact, they saw a motif in it for escaping Paris, the motif that justified their plans even in the eyes of the mob". The fact that the preparations for the royal couple's escape were far progressing at the time can be proved by the letter which the General de Bouillé wrote to Hans Axel von Fersen on April 18, 1791. Knowing nothing about the tempestuous events that took place at the courtyard of the Tuileries Palace on that day, Bouillé wrote about the actual state of affairs as regards the preparations of the escape. He stated that he had undertaken appropriate actions for Emperor Leopold II to send a dozen or so thousand Austrian soldiers to Luxembourg in order to place them near the French border. Judging by the amount of money necessary for organising the escape to be a several million *livres*, the marquis warned his Parisian correspondent that the lack of funds or the refusal to send Austrian troops would make the entire undertaking flash in the pan. This was so since, distrustful towards his own soldiers from the very beginning, Bouillé counted on foreign troops. As soon as he received the letter, Fersen induced Marie Antoinette to support the marquis's efforts at the Austrian court. Consequently, on April 20, 1791 the queen wrote another letter to the former French Ambassador to Austria in Paris, François, Count of Mercy-Argenteau, residing in Brussels asking him to send 15 thousand Austrian soldiers to Luxembourg⁴⁰.

⁴⁰ See H.A. Barton, *op. cit.*, pp. 103, 105–106; A. Söderhjelm, *Fersen...*, pp. 163–164; H.A. v. Fersen to E. Taube, Paris, April 18, 1791, *Rescue the Queen*, pp. 24–27. See also *Le comte de Fersen et la cour de France. Extraits des papiers du grand maréchal de Suède, comte Jean Axel de Fersen* [further on: *Fersen et la cour de France*], R.M. Klinckowström (ed.), vol. I, Paris 1877, pp. 84, 89, 99; *Mémoires de Madame Campan, première femme de chambre de Marie Antoinette*, J. Chalon, C. De Angulo (eds), Paris 1988; F. de Bouillé to H.A. v. Fersen, Metz, April 18, 1791, *Rescue the Queen*, pp. 27–28. See also N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, pp. 32–33, 39; J. Baszkiewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 235; J. Baszkiewicz, S. Meller, *op. cit.*, p. 267.

Both the royal couple and Hans Axel von Fersen hoped for the court of Vienna to eventually support their plans. The mission to definitely convince Leopold II of the necessity to arrange for the royal family's escape from Paris was entrusted with the Baron of Breteuil who handed in a memorandum to the emperor in Vienna on May 3 with which he claimed military help from Austria as well as considerable financial support (15 million *livres*). On May 22, Marie Antoinette personally wrote another letter to her brother asking him to send 8–10 thousand Austrian soldiers to Luxembourg. Alas, contrary to the organisers' expectations, all those endeavours remained fruitless. The emperor's position never changed since the mid-March 1791 when he advised Marie Antoinette to temporarily abandon the idea of escaping from France and to delay it, awaiting the further development of the events instead. He also warned her that he would be unable to do anything neither for her nor for Louis XVI without the previous consent of leading European powers to interfere in France's home affairs as well as without prior negotiating the plan of the cooperation with the powers in question. Yet, in spite of the lack of Austria's overt declaration, Paris failed to give up the energetic, though miserably clumsy, preparations for the royal escape. The increased shopping drew the unnecessary attention of the queen's retinue and so did the order to make a huge trunk, allegedly a gift for her sister, Maria Christina. Supposedly, the preparations caused some suspicion in one of the queen's servants. The latter one informed the municipal authorities; yet, her denunciation was neglected. Through the agency of the Russian diplomat's widow, the Baroness von Korff, residing in Paris, Fersen also ordered making an enormous berline, big enough to hold the royal family and its huge luggage. Painted yellow and green, and lined inside with white velvet as well as moving very slowly, the berline drew everybody's attention. The six thousand *livres*' worth of a car, the vehicle was collected from its maker as early as March 12, 1791. Fersen, who through the agency of Taube, Mercy-Argenteau and his friend, James Quentin Craufurd, made desperate attempts to obtain some significant loan for the royal family, engaged all his financial means in the preparations. Furthermore, he incurred considerable debts. He borrowed 169 thousand *livres* from the Baroness von Korff and 93 thousand *livres* from her daughter, Madame Stegelman. Also, his friend, Eleonore Sullivan, lent him 300 thousand *livres*. Owing to Fersen's generosity, the entire undertaking cost him 600 thousand *livres* altogether, by the end of May 1791 the preparations for Louis XVI's departure from Paris were completed. On May 26 the count notified the Marquis of Bouillé that the king would leave Paris in early June as soon as he received the expected payment of two million *livres* from the civil list. Awaiting the payment was not particularly justified. At the time, Louis XVI had the considerable amount

of four million *livres* at his disposal. Still, the decision was to wait for the additional two million. In the same letter, Fersen also wrote to the Marquis of Bouillé that the latter could withhold sending his troops to the king as long as he was completely certain of his soldiers' loyalty. He also warned his correspondent of the possible moves of the army not to draw attention of the inhabitants of the region through which the royal family would pass⁴¹.

Meanwhile, the preparations for the royal departure from Paris continued. Fersen was determined to carry through the royal family's departure from the capital regardless of the results of negotiations with foreign powers. On May 31, 1791 he wrote to Evert Taube that the king's departure had been fixed for June 12, yet, the Marquis of Bouillé made it postponed till June 15 or 20 in order to allow the Austrian to concentrate their troops towards the border. In the same letter, Fersen informed Taube that he was sure the Count of Artois and the Prince of Condé resolved to step in France. Still, weak as they were and having had only limited means at their disposal, their ultimately action might jeopardise the plans of the king's escape. Therefore, Fersen asked Taube to make Gustav III influence emigrants by convincing the latter ones not to act against the king's will and to withhold their preparations to invade France. Also, he begged his correspondent to do his best not to let the plan of the royal escape be known to the aristocrats residing in Aachen since everything would be in vain then. In early June 1791, the news of the wide scale conceived plans of Louis XVI's escape from Paris also influenced the change in the so far reluctant position of Emperor Leopold II as regards the project. In his two letters to Marie Antoinette (dated June 6 and 12), Leopold II vaguely promised his help and cooperation with the organisers of the royal family's departure. Meantime, the court of Vienna commenced regarding a possibility of direct interference in France's home affairs. The change in the attitude of the Austrian court was undoubtedly

⁴¹ See L.A. de Breteuil's memorandum for Emperor Leopold II, Vienna, May 3, 1791, *Rescue the Queen*, p. 28. In the same document Breteuil warned the emperor that "if the quick progressing of democracy is not withheld, no throne will linger", see *ibidem*. See also A. Söderhjelm, *Fersen...*, pp. 166, 169–170; H.A. Barton, *op. cit.*, pp. 106, 112–113; Leopold II to Marie Antoinette, Vienna, March 14, 1791, in: *Marie Antoinette, Joseph II und Leopold II. Ihr Briefwechsel*, A. v. Arneth (ed.), Leipzig–Paris–Vienna 1866, p. 151; T.C. W. Blanning, *The Origins of the French Revolutionary Wars*, London–New York 1986, p. 84; J. Baszkiewicz, *op. cit.*, pp. 235–236; H.A. v. Fersen to F. de Bouillé, Paris, May 26, 1791, *Rescue the Queen*, pp. 28–29. It is worth mentioning that Louis XVI's departure from Paris was postponed until several weeks later due to the fact that the king awaited the response of the Spanish court where he appealed to for help. Yet, the replay never came. See H.A. Barton, *op. cit.*, p. 107. Still the Spanish undertook some military arrangements by forming a cordon along the French border and moving their army in that direction. See C.A. Ehrensward to Gustav III, Madrid, May 12, 1791 (and apostille to the message), Aranjuez, May 30 and Madrid, June 13, 1791, RA, Hispanica vol. 33. See also N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

connected with the arrival of a special envoy of the court of Berlin, Johann Rudolf von Bischoffwerder, to Milan on June 10, 1791. The latter one brought with him a proposal to sign a Prussian-Austrian alliance treaty. First, the emperor seemed far from thinking of signing any treaty with Frederick Wilhelm II. However, two days later, a fully credible message came to the capitol of Lombard that Louis XVI was about to take up another attempt to escape from Paris. Now, Bischoffwerder could observe a radical change in the mood of his distinguished host who suddenly became interested in the proposition he had been offered. Still, there was one serious obstacle for the Prussian-Austrian pact to be signed, namely, the contents of the instruction brought by Bischoffwerder from Berlin. Frederick Wilhelm II intended his agreement with the Austrian court to become anti-Russian. When, at the end of May 1791 Bischoffwerder was leaving Berlin, it still seemed that the war among Russia, Prussia and Great Britain was a question of time. However, the Austrian court was by no means interested in that kind of an agreement. The emperor's intention was to maintain friendly relations with Catherine II. On the contrary, he planned to act as a mediator between the courts of Berlin and St. Petersburg. He also hoped for maintaining his previous alliance with St. Petersburg while signing the new pact with Berlin. Vienna dummies conceived that oscillating between the two courts would allow Austria to control the former one in the international arena. However, what interested Austrian politics most was the development of the situation in France⁴².

Meanwhile, all the preparations for Louis XVI's escape were completed in France. On June 3, 1791 Madame Korff took a test ride in the new berline to Chantilly and back. Two days later she collected her passport from the Russian embassy. On June 13, 1791 Hans Axel von Fersen wrote to the Marquis of Bouillé that the king was leaving Paris at midnight on June 20. The necessity to remove the dauphin's nanny, the person whose loyalty for the royal

⁴² See H.A. v. Fersen to E. Taube, Paris, May 31, 1791, RA, Stafsundsarkivet, Evert Taubes Samling, vol. II; H.A. Barton, *op. cit.*, p. 108; N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, pp. 52–53; *Fersen et la cour de France*, pp. 133–135. Fersen's fears as regards the attitude of the French emigrants proved fully justified. During the meeting of the Count of Artois with the emperor held in mid-June in Mantua, the former one presented a project on preparing an armed expedition against the revolutionary France. About 35 thousand imperial soldiers, 20 thousand Spanish soldiers, 20 thousand Prussian soldiers, 15 thousand Sardinian soldiers, ten thousand Bern soldiers and 20 thousand soldiers provided by the German Reich were to take part in the expedition. Another thing is that Leopold II was far from accepting the proposal. See N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, p. 51, 63–64. On the comparison of the then policy of the court of Vienna see K.T. Heigel, *Deutsche Geschichte vom Tode Friedrichs des Grossen bis zur Auflösung des alten Reichs*, vol. I, Stuttgart 1899, p. 374; T.C. W. Blanning, *op. cit.*, pp. 84–85; *Journal über die Unterhandlung mit Bischoffwerder von Seiner Ankunft in Mailand 10. Juni bis zu seiner Abreise von Mailand 24. Juni 1791*, in: *Quellen zur Geschichte der deutschen Kaiserpolitik Oesterreichs, während der französischen Revolution 1790–1801*, A. v. Vivenot (ed.), vol. I, Vienna 1874, pp. 176–181; R.H. Lord, *The Second Partition of Poland*, Cambridge [Mass.] 1915, pp. 210–211.

family seemed doubtful, from the royal retinue posed another reason for the delay. In order to protect the royal family, Fersen and the general agreed that relay horses as well as military pickets would be placed along the road to the king's destination, Montmédy via Châlons-sur-Marne, Sainte-Menehould and Argonne, seemingly to protect the cash box brought by a mail-coach for the Marquis of Bouillé's army. What is more, indispensable security precautions were taken to protect the organisers of the royal family's escape. In the same letter, Fersen assured the Marquis of Bouillé that the first thing he was going to do in the case of the king's being arrested would be to ensure whether the latter one had been warned in time. On June 18, the Count von Fersen collected a counterfeit passport in the Swedish embassy. Since then, all that was left for him to do was patiently awaiting the prearranged hour of the departure⁴³.

GUSTAV III'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE PLANS OF LOUIS XVI' ESCAPE

The preparations for the royal family's escape from Paris were closely followed by the Swedish court. Since the beginning of April 1791, King Gustav III was up to date with all the actions his Paris conspirers undertook. Hans Axel von Fersen was particular about his king being able to neutralise the Triple Alliance countries and to prevent the latter's hostile actions set against the French court. However, the count could not foresee the fact that Gustav III would personally and directly get involved in the action of restoring the old order in France. Still, the latter fact should not have come as a surprise to Fersen. Namely, up to that moment, Gustav III had been negotiating with the court of St. Petersburg as regards the future intervention in the aid of Louis XVI, the fact about which his Paris correspondent must have been undoubtedly informed. Due to the unsuccessful talks conducted in St. Petersburg by Curt von Stedingk, the arrival in Stockholm of Catherine II's new ambassador was much awaited by the king. Also, he eagerly followed the Count von Fersen in the latter's actions back in Paris. On May 10, 1791 the king wrote to Curt von Stedingk that he had received a message from Paris of a courier at the Russian embassy having left the capital of France on April 1 and taking with him a package of the letters Hans Axel von Fersen wrote to the court of Stockholm. Since Stedingk had never mentioned any package in his latest telegrams, the king realised that it might not have reached him yet. Extremely anxious about that, the king feared that the packet could have been seized in France, which, in turn, could have resulted

⁴³ See H.A. v. Fersen to F. de Bouillé, Paris, June 13, 1791, *Rescue the Queen*, p. 30; H.A. Barton, *op. cit.*, p. 113; A. Söderhjelm, *Fersen...*, p. 169.

in fatal consequences for the French royal family. Later on in the letter, Gustav III wrote that the events of April 18 and 19 had exposed Louis XVI to such an obvious danger that he himself resolved to help the French king. He also ordered Stedingk to get informed on what had happened to the unlucky package from Paris and to notify him about the results of the investigation as soon as possible. The king completed the letter with the statement that the invariable aim of his policy is the desire to close his negotiations with Catherine II⁴⁴.

On May 17, 1791, shortly before the arrival in Stockholm of the Russian ambassador, Otto Magnus von Stackelberg, Gustav III wrote an extensive letter to the Baron of Breteuil residing in Switzerland. He commenced with the statement that, from the very beginning, he had been following every action in question that had taken place in France. Both, the country and the royal family's misfortunes filled him with pain and desperation. Still, never did he forget the duties resulting from the fact of being a friend of Louis XVI. Surrounded by enemies, struggling against the dominance of the Russian Empire as well as against the anarchy and insubordination at home, the king was anxious to observe the events that plunged France in chaos, shook the stability of its throne and destroyed order and law. Oftentimes he showed his interest in the further lot of the French royal family. Alas, since he had been waging the war, he was unable to devote much of his attention to France's affairs. The moment the peace treaty had been signed, however, he did not waste any more time and began to engage all possible means in order to help his old ally and the grandson of Louis XV. In the situation when the powers tied to the House of France seemed to abandon it, the Swedish king considered it his clear duty to support France. He notified the royal family about that through Fersen. The latter one also informed him that Breteuil had been authorised to conduct negotiations with foreign powers. Thus, he was eager to notify Breteuil of own plans and ideas sending the letter through the agency of Count Nils Anton Barck from the resort of Foreign Affairs and a son of the former Swedish Minister at Vienna. Further on, Gustav III wrote that the prudence, loyalty and ardour of his envoy had been the reasons why he chose the latter one to accomplish such an important and sensitive mission. He also tried to convince Breteuil to entrust Barck with everything he feared to write directly to the king. Getting down to business, the Swedish king offered six thousand trained Swedish soldiers and six liners to the King of France, the forces which were supposed to be used to restore the old order in France. He also promised the participation of at least three thousand Russian soldiers in the future expedition if only

⁴⁴ See H.A. Barton, *op. cit.*, p. 110; Gustav III to C. v. Stedingk, Haga Palace, May 10, 1791, RA, Muscovitica vol. 489. See also N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

he managed to overcome the obstacles disabling him to sign an alliance with Catherine II. In return for sending military help, the French court was supposed to provide the Swedish king with the funds necessary for keeping and transporting the troops, unlimited command when in the battlefield as well as an official guarantee of renewing the former Swedish-French alliances as soon as the previous rights of the French king were restored. In particular he meant the renewal of the treaty of July 19, 1784 as well as of the secret subsidy convention of June 1, 1784. However, the amount of the yearly subsidies was supposed to increase so as to equal the sum of no less than three million *livres*. Gustav III ensured Breteuil that he was aware of the financial difficulties the French king had to face at that moment. The Swedish king would eagerly help Louis XVI with no preliminary conditions; yet, his limited financial resources forced him to impose the conditions in question. If, however, in future, Spain became interested in France's misfortunes and assisted it in this, then Spain could provide the latter one with the money it needed thus removing the sole obstacle that made it impossible for the Swedish king to immediately help his French cousin. Later on, Gustav III wrote that sending the Spanish army to aid Louis XVI seemed to him neither useful nor beneficial for France's affairs. The appearance of Spanish troops within French boundaries could result in the renewal of the former animosities between the two nations and thus making the attempt to rescue the royal family more difficult. Contrary to the latter action, the entering of the Swedish troops into France would provoke no hostility since the French had nothing against the Swedish. The long-lasting peace treaty between those two nations as well as former mutual victories made the Swedish almost the naturalised French. Furthermore, Sweden only tended to be well intentioned as regards France. Sweden's sole aim was the restoration of the monarchy. Thus, Louis XVI should not be afraid of the Swedish troops to the same degree as he could be afraid of the troops of his powerful and mercenary neighbours. The king completed his argumentation with the statement that if his proposal were accepted and Breteuil obtained an assent of any of the powers in question to have a port near France at his disposal, then the king would like to be informed about the fact so as to beach his troops there, set up the headquarters at the place and keep supplying the troops from the direction of the sea. In the same letter, Gustav III notified Breteuil about his plan to go to Aachen since his condition required an immediate hydrotherapy. Still, he declared his constant participation in the development of the affairs in France in the sense that, from where he was going to stay, he would be negotiating with German princes whose rights had been violated by the acts passed by the rebellious assembly. Informing Breteuil that, without the latter's reply, he would still undertake necessary preparations for the planned

expedition, Gustav III also stated that Louis XVI should not negotiate with his subjects. On regaining his freedom, he should first and foremost struggle against the rebels up to a moment when all his rights are restored, when he himself restores order at home and when he eventually secures himself a strong position outside the country, the latter one indispensable both, for the monarchs willing to aid him and for maintaining the balance of power in Europe⁴⁵.

Once the announced arrival of Stackelberg took place, Gustav III never intended to personally negotiate with Catherine II's envoy. Informed by Fersen about the considerable advancement of the preparations for the royal family's escape from Paris, the Swedish king resolved to travel to Aachen where he intended to await the freeing of Louis XVI from the hands of the French rebels. The choice of Aachen as a main headquarters was by no means accidental. Since the emigration began, the city comprised a seat of a large group of aristocrat refugees from France. There resided such people as Louis François, Prince of Conti (under the assumed name of the Count of Neuteuil), Joseph Hyacinthe, Count of Vaudreuil, André Hercule, Duke of Fleury (with his wife), Auguste Gabriel, Count of Coigny and many others. Although in the spring of 1791 most of the above-mentioned aristocrats (the Prince of Conti included) had already resided in other European towns, still, the Duchess of Croy with her family and (to use the words of Gustav III himself) "all the distinguished exiles from the French court composing the best ever company of men and women" remained in Aachen. Such a distinguished and sophisticated company posed a fine pretext for the Swedish king to appear in Aachen as well as they were supposed to make the time pass more pleasantly for the king awaiting the ultimate decision as regards Paris. Since he left Stockholm, the king kept in touch with his entrusted informers, Gustaf Mauritz Armfelt and Ulric Gustaf Franc, who were supposed to complete the negotiations with the Russian ambassador. Preparing for the warfare at the French border, Gustav III was growing impatient with the lack of satisfying progress in the Stockholm negotiations. In order to speed up the negotiations, the king was ready to make certain concessions to the court of St. Petersburg. For instance, he intended to give up his, up to that moment, consequent demand to correct the borderline with Russia. However, he insisted on obtaining the subsidies that were to make it possible for him to restore the former royal power in France. In searching possible allies against the French revolution, the Swedish king disregarded at first both, the emigrants and the emperor. He was of an opinion that the then anti-English policy of Leopold II would

⁴⁵ See Gustav III to L.A. de Breteuil, Haga Palace, May 17, 1791 (a copy), RA, Kungl. arkiv I. Handskriftsamlingen: Gustaf III; The same letter see also *Gustave III par ses lettres*, G. v. Proschwitz (ed.), Stockholm–Paris 1986, pp. 340–343. See also N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, pp. 31, 42–43; H.A. Barton, *Scandinavia in the Revolutionary Era 1760–1815*, Minneapolis 1986, p. 193.

make it impossible for him to effectively intervene so as to protect the affairs of his sister and his brother-in-law. During his stay in Brunswick, Gustav III also negotiated with the representative of the Prussian court, Charles William Ferdinand, Duke von Brunswick. The latter one assured the Swedish monarch of the readiness of the Triple Alliance countries to sign a peace treaty beneficial for Sweden. Although Gustav III was not at all interested in maintaining the talks with the courts of Berlin and London he promised to postpone his ultimate decision as regards completing Stockholm's talks with Russia for a dozen or so days. This was so, for the Swedish king resolved to treat the proposal of the Duke von Brunswick as a guarantee if the Stockholm negotiations failed in signing a peace treaty with the court of St. Petersburg. While writing his letter to Armfelt dated June 8, 1791, Gustav III was still unaware of the fact of a preliminary agreement having been signed with Stackelberg. On May 24, the Swedish negotiators, namely Carl Axel, Count von Wachtmeister, Gustaf Mauritz Armfelt, Ulric Gustaf Franc and Anders Håkansson had already signed the treaty with the court of St. Petersburg. On the same day they had also signed a secret convention concerning the mutual cooperation of the two courts against Prussia and England. What is more, Gustaf Mauritz Armfelt had signed a secret protocol concerning the future mutual cooperation of Sweden and Russia against the revolutionary France. Under the latter agreement, Catherine II was supposed to subsidise the court of Stockholm with the amount of 2,04 million *riksthalers* for the first six months of war and with the additional 169 thousand *riksthalers* for Gustav III's privy purse. Armfelt informed the king about the results of the negotiations only as late as May 31, 1791. Furthermore, he warned his distinguished correspondent of the affair having not been completed yet. The latter was due to the fact that all documents signed in Stockholm had to be ratified by the empress, which could be difficult⁴⁶.

⁴⁶ See Z. Anusik, *O polskq...*, pp. 160–161; idem, *Szwedzki...*, p. 110; A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige...*, pp. 229–230; eadem, *Revolutionärer och emigranter*, Stockholm 1918, pp. 81, 86 and fol. As regards Gustav III's instructions concerning the negotiations with Stackelberg see Gustav III to G.M. Armfelt, Rostok, June 2, 1791, *Bref till Armfelt*, pp. 177–179. See also N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, pp. 40–41, 45–48; C.T. Odhner, *op. cit.*, pp. 21–29 (Here, one can find a detailed discussion of the Swedish-Russian negotiations from February till May 1791); Gustav III to G.M. Armfelt, Brunswick, June 8, 1791, *Bref till Armfelt*, pp. 179–181. Problems with finalising the talks resigning a peace treaty with Russia were also presupposed by C. v. Stedingk who wrote to Gustav III about the difficult talks that the court of St. Petersburg held with the envoys from London and Berlin. See C. v. Stedingk to Gustav III, St. Petersburg, May 16/27, 1791, apostille, RA, Muscovitica vol. 451. Similarly, the Swedish Secretary of State was sceptical about the perspectives that the empress's ratification of the agreements negotiated in Stockholm could have. See U.G. Franc to C. v. Stedingk, Stockholm, May 27, 1791, *ibidem*, Muscovitica vol. 489. It is worth mentioning that at the same time Curt v. Stedingk was appointed the Swedish Ambassador to the court of St. Petersburg. See A. Forssell, *Histoire de l'administration des affaires étrangères 1721–1809*, in: *Histoire de l'Administration des Affaires Étrangères de Suède*, Upsal

On June 9, 1791 the Swedish ambassador, Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein who, owing to his connections with the revolutionary camp, had not been initiated into Gustav III's plans, wrote to the king about the increasing rumours in Paris concerning an expected attack of the foreign army upon France. In his opinion, the rumour was instigated by aristocrats who, in this way, intended to both, intimidate their enemies and encourage own supporters to more decisive actions. Commenting on the numerous speculations as regards the Swedish king's foreign travels, the ambassador mentioned that the rumour had it that the king intended to arrive *incognito* in Paris for a couple of days. However, Gustav III was much more interested in the contents of the letter written by the Baron of Breteuil from Sologne on the same day. This was so since the latter one promised the king huge profits to be obtained as soon as Louis XVI became free again. Still, the baron also wrote that, for the time being, as long as the king remained within the power of the rebels no parading the Swedish-French friendship was advisable so as not to provoke any jeopardy. Louis XVI's opinion at that time was such that keeping appearances and subtlety seemed to be the only ways out of the situation. Also, Breteuil convinced Gustav III that one of the reasons for which the king remained so patient and timid in the face of the intimidation he was enduring, was the lack of money. However, the odds were that he would be in the front of his army to demand his rights. In Breteuil's opinion, Louis XVI was supposed to think that his future success would be achieved owing to the nation's, not foreign, support. The baron fully agreed with the king on that. Thus, he did not accept the offer to assist him militarily since he was deeply convinced of being able to manage solely with the help of his own French generals and soldiers. Complaining about the distance from Sweden to France he regretted the fact that, for the time being, Louis XVI would not ask Gustav III to do his duty as an ally. Yet, as soon as the king was freed, the baron would immediately inform the king about a place convenient for setting up a military camp. Moreover, the French court would determine a port appropriate for beaching the Swedish troops. According to Breteuil, all of Gustav III's conditions were obvious and fair to the degree that the king would surely accept them only to fulfil them afterwards. This was so since the maintaining his alliance with the court of Stockholm comprised one of his political priorities. At the same time, the baron warned the Swedish king of the Frenchmen whom the king could meet in Spa and Aachen. He advised to take precautions in pronouncing any overt declarations of the friendship for the French king, the main reason for that being the fact that the National Assembly could have

1940, p. 362. Although Forssell gives no precise date of Stedingk's appointment as an ambassador, it probably took place after Otton von Stackelberg had arrived in Stockholm. It is not true that Stedingk was appointed the ambassador on March 13, 1792 See *Repertorium*, p. 415.

had spies among the emigrants. Thus, if the latter informed the assembly on what the Swedish king did or said in Spa, it could cause an intensified supervision over the French king. Breteuil also wrote that the knowledge of both, German princes and the people who worked for them inclined him to suppose that Gustav III would encounter difficulties as regards realisation of his great plans. The baron completed his letter with praising the young Barck who seemed to inherit all his virtues from his famous father. Being grateful for Gustav III's advice as to the matters entrusted with him, Breteuil asked the Swedish king to believe that his own king had never seriously intended to negotiate with his subjects as regards royal power. Louis XVI was a much-accused king, the fact that Gustav III would come across in Spa. Oftentimes, the French king felt offended with the unfair rumour spread concerning his behaviour, yet, he remained patient since he was convinced that his eventual success should close the mouth of all slanderers⁴⁷.

It seems that Breteuil's reply fully satisfied Gustav III. Although the baron unanimously rejected the proposal of the Swedish military intervention in France, yet, he did not exclude the possibility of the cooperation with the court of Stockholm the moment Louis XVI would be ready again to act on his own. Therefore, the baron's letter opened the way for some further negotiations, the fact which the Swedish king cared most about. It was obvious to him that before his negotiations with Catherine II were completed, he would be unable to undertake any actions against the revolutionary France. Breteuil's letter could have reached the king before he was entering Aachen in the morning on June 14, 1791. It was here where the king impatiently awaited the effects of Fersen's actions in Paris expecting the news of the successful progress of the intended escape of the French royal family at any moment. Still, he was anxious about the lack of progress in the negotiations with the court of St. Petersburg and he insisted on the quickest finalisation of the negotiations. In his letter to Gustaf Mauritz Armfelt dated June 19, 1791, the king announced that as soon as he received the news confirming the safe departure of the French royal family from Paris, he would immediately send his new aide-de-camp to Stockholm to deliver the king's new orders concerning the signing of the negotiated convention with Russia. In the same letter, the king also ordered Armfelt to commence preparations for sending the Swedish military troops over to the French border as soon as he signed the treaty with the court of St. Petersburg. However, the Swedish armament was supposed to be kept secret whereas the concentration of troops was to take place under the pretext of securing safe

⁴⁷ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, June 9, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 476; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 206–207; L.A. de Breteuil to Gustav III, Solothurn, June 9, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 524. The interesting thing is that the letter has been omitted by M. Price who published the entire correspondence between the king and the baron in the appendix to his article.

national borders in the face of a possibility of oncoming war between Russia and the Triple Alliance countries. Exactly at the same time, Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein became suspicious of his king intending to play some role in solving France's domestic problems. In his telegram dated June 19, 1791 von Holstein assured Gustav III of his loyalty and boundless dedication for his cause. He also promised obedience to Gustav III's all orders. Confirming the delivery of his king's order calling off all the Swedish officers still in the service in France, von Holstein wondered how he should act in case the officers were demanded giving an oath not to undertake any actions directed against the revolution. The same telegram also included the information on one of the leaders of the National Assembly, the man who held Gustav III in high esteem, having mentioned a possibility of signing an alliance much advantageous for Stockholm. Had the circumstances been different, Staël would have been eager to take up a discussion upon the subject in question. At the moment, however, knowing about the king's reluctance towards the new order in France, he did not even try to go into details concerning the proposal⁴⁸.

Contrary to the ambassador to Paris, who was not informed upon the Swedish court's policy towards France, Gustav III's intentions had long been known to his envoy at the court of St. Petersburg. Only as late as June 14, 1791 Curt von Stedingk expressed his full opinion on the subject. He wrote that when it came to the negotiations concerning the signing of the alliance with Russia, everything would depend upon the attitude of the Triple Alliance countries. If the allies kept together so as to pose a jeopardy for the Russian court, Catherine II may need an agreement with Gustav III and thus she would accept his conditions. If, however, London and Berlin withdrew from their lines of policy, then the Russian would attempt to sign the alliance with Sweden at the lowest possible cost. Similarly, Stedingk's remarks as regards French affairs proved equally interesting. In the same telegram, the ambassador wrote that the court of St. Petersburg had serious doubts as to whether the Swedish king was determined to play an active role in solving France's problems. Stedingk himself remained silent in that matter doing his best to mislead the inquisitive. He was of an opinion that precautions must be taken when it comes to saving both, the royal family and the entire France. Being an advocate of the counterrevolution in France, still, Stedingk persuaded Gustav III to restrain from any overt actions against the new order as long as the royal family would be safe and sound. He also expected the same from the

⁴⁸ See Gustav III to G.M. Armfelt, Aachen, June 16, 1791 and Gustav III to G.M. Armfelt and U.G. Franc, Aachen, June 19, 1791, *Bref till Armfelt*, pp. 182–185; A. Södrhjelm, *Sverige...*, p. 232; N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, pp. 31–32, 49–50. See also E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, June 19, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 476; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, p. 207.

princes. An interesting thing is that, like Breteuil had done before, Stedingk, too, asked Gustav III to be on his guard when in Aachen since he knew well the people who were staying there at the time. They declared there were about 50 thousand emigrants near the French border and if a person insisted on saying there were only ten thousand of them, those people considered such a person a professed democrat. All in all, Stedingk was concluding, the time was not right yet for the counterrevolution in France to break out. In his opinion, it would be best to wait till the end of the term of the National Assembly incoming the following autumn. However, he wholeheartedly encouraged his king to intervene in France in order to rescue King Louis XVI and his family. He was convinced that even the empress would resolve to cooperate with the Swedish monarch to the degree that she would support him in his efforts to save the French royal family⁴⁹. Although Stedingk failed to predict the true intentions of the court of St. Petersburg, one thing seems to be certain. Aachen, Stockholm and St. Petersburg were equally impatient in awaiting the news of Louis XVI's successful escape. On the other hand, Paris remained quiet in spite of all the suspicions and conjectures since it knew nothing about the conspiracy being hatched at the court.

⁴⁹ See C. v. Stedingk to Gustav III, St. Petersburg, June 3/14, 1791, RA, Muscovitica vol. 451.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE FAILED ESCAPE OF LOUIS XVI AND FIRST ATTEMPTS TO ORGANISE THE ANTI-FRENCH COALITION (JUNE-OCTOBER 1791)

THE VARENNES AFFAIR AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

On June 20, 1791 Hans Axel von Fersen commenced executing the plan the results of which Gustav III awaited so eagerly in Aachen. Late at night on the same day the king, his family and their escort managed to split out of the carelessly guarded Tuileries. The queen maliciously enjoyed the critical situation in which La Fayette, responsible for guarding Louis XVI, would find himself after the royal family's escape. It was the Count von Fersen, disguised as a coachman, who was waiting in a fiacre outside the palace to drive the royal family to the outskirts of Paris where a large berline, drawn by six horses, awaited them. In the event of an unexpected stop they were to use a fake passport. It belonged to the Marquise of Tourzel who travelled under the name of Catherine II's subject, the Baroness von Korff. The king's children, Madame Royal and the dauphin, pretended to be the baroness's two daughters, Amélie and Aglaé. Marie Antoinette was playing the role of their governess, Mrs Rochet. Madame Elisabeth, the king's sister, was to be Bona Rosalia. Louis XVI pretended to be a butler of Mrs Korff, Durand. At parting, the king left in the palace an extensive declaration addressed to the French that contained accusations of the National Constituent Assembly and bitter laments over his miserable lot that he had to endure since the beginning of the revolution. The declaration dated June 20, 1791 enclosed the order for the ministers not to make any decisions on his behalf until the further notice. In other words, Louis XVI was burning his boats as regards the agreement with the National Constituent Assembly, counting on the success of his escape as well as escaping the control of the people who limited his power to such a considerable degree¹.

¹ See J. Baszkiewicz, *Ludwik XVI*, Wrocław 1983, pp. 236–237; H.A. Barton, *Count Hans Axel von Fersen. Aristocrat in an Age of Revolution*, Boston 1975, pp. 118–122; L. Villat, *La révolution*

According to the Marquise of Tourzel, immediately after Saint-Martin the king became talkative and optimistic. Yet, the fugitives travelled slow. They stopped a couple of times. Louis XVI was in an excellent mood. He even spoke to the encountered peasants about upcoming harvest. The fugitives were allegedly first recognised in Châlons, the fact that entailed no dire consequences. However, the travellers seriously worried about their several-hour delay in reaching Pont-de-Somme-Vesle where no soldiers awaited them. It was 6 p.m. An escort of hussars had been standing at the place since noon which alarmed local peasants who began gathering near them, each holding a cue or a rifle. Claude Antoine, Duke of Choiseul who was in command of the troop was afraid of the incoming skirmish, thus, in no time at all he deduced the delay meant that the royal escape had been cancelled. He not only withdrew himself but also unwillingly ruined the entire escort system by notifying the distant troops that the whole affair had been over. To make matters worse, he withdrew using not the main track but side roads and thus inspiring fear among local peasants. In the town of Sainte-Menehould the postmaster's son, Jean Baptiste Drouet, became suspicious towards the travellers of the berline. By that time, the whole town became slightly agitated. The rumour had it that Drouet recognised Louis XVI by comparing the person in question with the king's portrait on a note. To make a long story short, he reported his suspicions to the town authorities and consequently was ordered to follow the berline. Drouet managed to catch up on the immobilised vehicle in Varennes and ordered to barricade the bridge on the river Aire. When the king resolved to travel on, it soon turned out that the bridge had been barricaded. The alarm bell rung at which sound all the peasants gathered nearby. Thus, the alarmed townspeople blockaded the road for the suspicious vehicle. The royal family was recognised and arrested at about 11 p.m. on June 22, 1791. Hence, Louis XVI could enjoy his freedom only for about 24 hours. In the morning of June 22 the royal family commenced their way back to Paris among the crowds of, oftentimes armed, peasants gathered along the road shouting and screaming at the berline. The common opinion was that the king had been escaping abroad in order to bring about foreign invasion upon France, overthrow the revolution and restore despotism and feudal order in the country. Additionally, Louis XVI was clearly unlucky about the situation. Notified about the failed escape, the Marquis of Bouillé arrived at Varennes two hours after the king's departure².

et l'Empire (1789–1815), vol. I (*Les Assemblées révolutionnaires 1789–1799*), Paris 1947, pp. 112–113; A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige och den franska revolutionen. Bidrag till kännedom om Sveriges och Frankrikes inbördes förhållande i slutet av 1700-talet*, vol. I (*Gustav III:s tid*), Stockholm 1920, p. 233; N. Åkeson, *Gustaf III:s förhållande till franska revolutionen*, vol. I, Lund 1885, p. 54.

² See A. Soboul, *Rewolucja francuska 1789–1799*, Warszawa 1951, p. 120; A. Mathiez, *La révolution française*, vol. I (*La chute de la royauté 1787–1792*), Paris 1928, p. 170; idem,

Meantime, Paris considered Louis XVI's escape a prelude to a foreign intervention. The first act that the assembly announced after they found about the king's escape in the morning of June 21 was the order to close all the borders as well as the ban on the export of currency, weapons and ammunition. Furthermore, the assembly announced the mobilisation of national guards in the north-eastern part of France as well as they ordered the conscription of 100 thousand volunteers. At the same time, the king's escape resulted in the democratic movement to flourish. Paris witnessed numerous revolutionary actions against the monarchy. The province was sending to the capital numerous petitions demanding the punishment of the deceitful king, his removal from the throne or even the proclamation of the republic. The entire France wondered about further lot of the royal family after their return to Paris. However, nobody could have foreseen the fact of the king having agreed with the party of "constitutionalists", the dominant one within the assembly, as soon as on the way back from Varennes to Paris. On June 23, 1791 in the vicinity of Dormans Louis XVI's retinue was joined by three commissioners of the National Constituent Assembly, Jérôme Pétion, Joseph Antoine Barnave and Marie Charles, Count of Latour-Maubourg, who were to escort the king on his way to the capital. In Meaux, under the pretext of visiting the bishop's palace, Marie Antoinette was said to have a private talk with Barnave. The queen asked him what the royal couple should do in its present position. At the same time, she suggested to him that a political group he belonged to for a long time could be privileged to take the position of crown's advisers. As both, Barnave and his friends, Adrien Duport and Alexandre de Lameth, had already been interested in a similar arrangement and were secretly cooperating with the court after the death of the Count of Mirabeau, Barnave almost immediately accepted the queen's proposal. This was so since the moderate majority of the Legislative that had been working on the project of the monarchist constitution for two years did not wish at all the political and social radicalisation of the revolution process. That was also the reason for the constitutionalists to attempt to withhold the democratic movement. They pressed upon the idea of keeping Louis XVI enthroned since the time the latter had been arrested. On June 25, 1791 the National Constituent Assembly made a compromise about the king's future lot: he was supposed to be "temporarily" suspended as

Rewolucja francuska, Warszawa 1956, p. 155; J. Baszkiewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 238; A. Söderhjelm, *op. cit.*, p. 234; N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, p. 55. For more information on the question of the failed escape of the royal family from Paris see V. Fournel, *L'événement de Varennes*, Paris 1890; G. Lenotre, *L'événement de Varennes*, Paris 1905; C. Aimond, *Histoire de la ville de Varennes-en-Argonne*, Bar-le-Duc 1928; idem, *L'énigme de Varennes. Le dernier voyage du roi Louis XVI. Juin 1791*, Paris 1936. See also E. Bimbenet, *Fuite de Louis XVI à Varennes*, Paris 1854; J.Q. Craufurd, *Notices sur Marie Stuart, reine d'Ecosse, et sur Marie Antoinette, reine de France*, Paris 1819.

the head of the government until his position towards the constitution was cleared up. Both, the royal couple and the dauphin, were to be guarded when at the Tuileries which practically meant house arrest. The assembly's commissioners were also ordered to "investigate" the king and the queen. On the same day, June 25, the sad and gloomy entering of the royal couple into Paris took place. Patriotic clubs suggested welcoming the king with icy silence. National guardians were to keep their gun barrels down and everybody had to keep their heads capped. The huge crowd proved surprisingly disciplined in complying with the orders. Louis XVI was supposed to tell La Fayette, who welcomed him, that he had become convinced that the public opinion supported the revolution. When Marie Antoinette was leaving the berline she was terrified. She said later that she was afraid that her enemies would give her to the crowd or would separate her from the king and send to prison³.

On the next day, June 26, the deputies appointed by the National Constituent Assembly investigated Louis XVI in the Tuileries. The king explained that he had never intended to leave France. He said he had planned to stay close to the borderline in case some possible foreign intervention took place. By saying so he must have been thinking about the imperial armed demonstration that he had striven for and that he had been provoking. He denied having had any secretive contacts with foreign courts, a blatant lie. Finally, he stated that he had left because of the rumours of having been imprisoned and he had intended to prove otherwise. Every single word of the king's explanation was contradictory to his declaration of six days before. Still, the investigators took his words for granted. However, Louis XVI, his wife and son were supposed to be rigorously guarded. For the next 24 hours they were kept under surveillance. Yet, the situation of the royal family was soon to be changed for better. On June 26, a fugitive to Luxembourg, François Claude, Marquis of Bouillé, sent a daring manifesto to the assembly with which he accepted his full responsibility for "abducting" the king and taking him away from Paris. Thus, he made it easier for the deputies to realise Louis XVI from the personal responsibility for the Varennes affair. In the next few days the relations between Marie Antoinette and the leaders of the Triumvirate grew closer. Thus, as soon as June 29, Marie Antoinette could inform Hans

³ See J. Baszkiewicz, *op. cit.*, pp. 238–240; *The Letters of Marie Antoinette, Fersen and Barnave* [further on: *The Letters of Marie Antoinette*], O.G. Heidenstam (ed.), London 1926, pp. 32–33; A. Mathiez, *Rewolucja...*, pp. 156–159; L. Villat, *op. cit.*, pp. 113–114, 115–117; A. Soboul, *op. cit.*, p. 120. It needs mentioning that the agreement Marie Antoinette had made with the National Constituent Assembly's envoy, Joseph Antoine Barnave, during her way back to Paris gave fruit in the form of a secret correspondence having been kept until the beginning of 1792. See *Marie-Antoinette et Barnave. Correspondance secrète (Juillet 1791 – Janvier 1792)*, A. Söderhjelm (ed.), Paris 1934. On the question of Barnave's secretive relations with the queen see also A. Söderhjelm, *Marie Antoinettes stora hemlighet*, Stockholm 1934.

Axel von Fersen that although the royal family was guarded day and night, still she, the king and the dauphin were perfectly safe in Paris. However, the royal couple's allies were preparing themselves for a harsh struggle to keep the monarchy in power. The first success of the latter was that in spite of the left wing's strong protests, Louis XVI was not indicted and only the Marquis of Bouillé and some of his accomplices were sued. Supported by fraternal associations and democratic press, the Cordeliers' Club still led its republican campaign. New petitions were constantly filed, dangerous manifestations repeated. On July 15, 1791 Barnave gave a great speech in front of the assembly in which he attempted to compare the republic system to the state of anarchy. He asked the deputies a fundamental question, namely, whether they headed at finishing the revolution or they intended to commence it anew. His arguments convinced most of the assembly that resolved to end up all excesses. On the next day, a split in the Jacobin Club took place. The supporters of the Lameth brothers along with the group concentrated around La Fayette seceded thus establishing a new club at the Feuillants monastery. Finally, on July 17 the famous massacre at the Field of Mars took place where the Parisian National Guard, acting at the command of the Legislative, opened fire at demonstrators attempting to glorify their republican petition (the celebration of the second anniversary of the revolution was in progress at the time). After the massacre repressions followed. On the power of the special decree the Cordeliers' Club was closed and hundreds of leaders of populist associations were imprisoned and brought to trial. Also numerous newspapers were suspended. That is how the democratic party was crushed and devoid of leaders at the moment the election for the Legislative was about to take place. For Barnave and his political friends the most important thing, however, was that due to the brutal pacification of the republican opposition, the monarchy was saved⁴.

ERIK MAGNUS STAËL VON HOLSTEIN TOWARDS THE FRENCH MONARCHY CRISIS

Political crisis in France was closely observed by Gustav III's ambassador. He was in fact the only Swedish diplomat involved in French affairs who was not initiated into his ruler's plans. On June 22, 1791 Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein, unaware of anything, informed Stockholm about Louis XVI's escape from Paris. He also emphasised the fact that there was peace and

⁴ See J. Baszkiewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 240; Marie Antoinette to H.A. v. Fersen, Paris, June 29, 1791, H.A. v. Fersen, *Rescue the Queen. A Diary of the French Revolution 1789–1793* [further on: *Rescue the Queen*], A. Carlsson, E. Elstob (eds), London 1971, p. 37; A. Mathiez, *Rewolucja...*, pp. 159–161; A. Soboul, *op. cit.*, p. 121; L. Villat, *op. cit.*, pp. 114, 116, 117. See also A. Mathiez, *Le club des Cordeliers pendant la crise de Varennes et le massacre du Champ-de-Mars*, Paris 1910.

order in the capital. The assembly continued its work and adopted a decree stating that it would work as long as the work of the revolution were consolidated. He also assured Gustav III that all parties were uniting with each other as to defend the present order. Therefore, he believed that Louis XVI (Staël was convinced that the king's escape would be successful) should not even try to change the new state of affairs. In the same message, Staël wrote that he had agreed with the Ambassador of Spain, Carlos José Gutiérrez, Count of Fernán-Nuñez, on steps that should be taken to ensure their safety as well as that of their posts. Yet, the ambassador's concerns proved to be unjustified. On the same day, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Armand Marc de Montmorin, turned to him with an official note of the National Assembly. The latter wished him to stay in Paris despite the absence of the king in the city. Two days later, Staël von Holstein's mood had deteriorated, though. On June 24 he wrote that although it was prohibited to use post horses, he did not hesitate to send a special courier to the king. The rumour had it in Paris that it was Gustav III who had persuaded Louis XVI to leave the capital. If those rumours were to turn true, Staël did not see the possibility of further service for the king. However, for the time being he informed Gustav III that the assembly was trying to calm the people. He also wrote that the only obstacle in that regard could be the party of Orléans which was always willing to cause some unrest. Yet, as the leader of the party, the Duke of Orléans, was widely despised, one should not fear that he would cause any trouble. Later that day, at 5 p.m., Staël was forced to write another message to his ruler. He wrote in it about the royal family's arrest. He emphasised that there was no hope that the king could be released as he was escorted by a large number of national guards. Because of the great excitement among people Staël feared that the king's arrival to Paris could lead to another unrest. He also emphasised that the assembly pondered on how to treat the fugitive king. In the same message, Staël informed the Stockholm court that people's enmity against the royal couple could pose a huge threat to the safety of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. However, he was much more concerned with suspicions that he had participated in the conspiracy together with Fersen who was said to be the main organiser of the king's escape. What is more, an increasing number of the French people looked at the Swedish embassy with a growing distrust. The inhabitants of Paris were, in fact, convinced that Gustav III would soon invade France with 30 thousand soldiers as to make the counterrevolution break out⁵.

⁵ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, June 22 and 24, 1791 (two messages dated the same day), Riksarkivet in Stockholm [further on: RA], Gallica vol. 476, no page numbering (the remark applies to all files of Riksarkivet); *Correspondance diplomatique du baron de Staël-Holstein ambassadeur de Suède en France et de son successeur comme chargé d'affaires le baron Brinkman. Documents inédits sur la révolution (1783–1799) recueillis aux Archives Royales*

In the message dated June 25, 1791 Staël von Holstein described the royal family's return to Paris. He deeply regretted that his friend, Fersen, contributed to the king and the queen's misfortune. In his opinion, the project was not only dangerous but also ill-prepared. Moreover, the execution of Fersen's plan was impossible from the very beginning because of the current state of affairs in France. On that occasion, Staël aptly stated that: "in matters of such a great importance we should see the state of things as it is, not as we would like it to be". On the same day, the ambassador cancelled his earlier orders as regards the resignation of all Swedish officers who still were in the French service. He assumed that Gustav III wanted them to be carried out only if Louis XVI had safely left his country. When the king became a prisoner of his own subjects, though, "their execution might turn against this unfortunate ruler and would only confirm the suspicion that he was negotiating with foreign powers at the same time when he was assuring the assembly of his devotion to the revolution". On June 30 Staël complained to Gustav III that he had not been informed at all about the king's projects on France. Meanwhile, it was said in Paris that the King of Sweden was negotiating with the French emigrants and he would invade France at any moment. The ambassador was to be endangered because of all those rumours. In the same message Staël wrote that he had had the opportunity to borrow 630 thousand *livres* for the Stockholm court but he could not have guaranteed his contractor that Gustav III would not intervene in France. The ambassador was strongly opposed to such an intervention and thus he tried to dissuade his king from the idea. At the same time, he praised the National Assembly's work and stated that France would become the theatre of bloody scenes and a civil war if an attempt to take back people's so far achievements was made⁶.

In early July 1791 Staël von Holstein reported that Louis XVI appealed to the National Assembly's leaders with a proposal to ratify and swear on the new constitution on the condition that they would accept changes proposed by him. For the time being, however, the assembly did not intend to decide on the king's future as it hoped that in the meantime people's emotions would fall. According to Staël, there were slim hopes for making those wishes come true as anti-royal petitions were still coming from the province. Yet, he predicted that sooner or later an agreement between the king and the National Constituent Assembly would be achieved. On July 8 the ambassador wrote that although people were indignant at the assembly for not taking any steps against the king, one should not expect that deputies would decide to act

de Suède [further on: *Corr. Staël-Holstein*], L. Leouzon Le Duc (ed.), Paris 1881, pp. 207–208, 209–210. See also A.M. de Montmorin to E.M. Staël v. Holstein, Paris, June 22, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 476; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 208–209.

⁶ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, June 25 and 30, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 476; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 210–213.

against Louis XVI. In his opinion, the Legislative would like to announce that the king's escape had had no significance and had not led to the loss of his rights. Staël also supposed that the majority of the assembly would like to keep Louis XVI on the throne, give him full executive power and introduce changes proposed by him to those decrees that were not consistent with the constitution. In the same message, the ambassador wrote that although republican tendencies in France seemed to be weaker than before, they were still arousing considerable anxiety. The ambassador's mood had significantly improved over the next few days. On July 15 he wrote that the leaders of all parties in the assembly had united in order to preserve the monarchy. The leaders of the assembly had even decided to send a trusted man to the Count of Artois as to urge both, him and other emigrants to return to France. Staël strongly supported that solution. He believed that emigrants' return to the country would strengthen the constitution and give the monarchy power to enforce the law and restore order in the kingdom. He did not think, however, that negotiations with the princes would bring any effects. In the same message, the Swedish diplomat wrote that he was assured that the British government was financing activities of Jacques Pierre Brissot de Warville and other politicians who openly opted for the republic. Yet, he could not take responsibility for the accuracy of the information⁷.

On July 17, 1791, the day of the massacre at the Field of Mars, Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein wrote to Gustav III about republican sentiments being re-established in Paris. At the same time, he concluded that supporters of the republic had been bribed. He suspected the party of Orléans and the British government the most as their supporters were to resort to a bribery in order to increase tension in France. In the same message, Staël wrote about the growing importance of the Jacobins who did not support Louis XVI and thus had sent a petition to the assembly in which they demanded to overthrow the king and replace him by the regency. Although the ambassador was well aware of the Jacobins' importance in Paris, he still believed that the assembly would be able to control the situation in the capital and would effectively oppose clubs that were arousing discontent among people. Yet, everything depended on the attitude of the Paris National Guard. As long as the guards remained faithful to the National Constituent Assembly, Staël was not worried about the royal family's safety. He wrote, however, that in the event of an universal revolt, it would be very difficult to predict the scale of a misfortune it could lead to. The very next day, however, Staël, not without certain satisfaction, could inform his king that peace in Paris had been restored. He praised the National Guard which had not hesitated to deal with people's

⁷ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, July 6, 8 and 15, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 476; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 213–217.

demonstration. He emphasised that the leaders of the democratic party were surprised with that fact. The ambassador was assured that both, Maximilian Robespierre and Georges Danton went berserk at the news of the people's massacre⁸. Undoubtedly, Gustav III was pleased with that turn of events. It seemed, however, that he did not bother to carefully study the content of Staël von Holstein's messages as at that time he was focused on completely different issues.

GUSTAV III IN AACHEN, FIRST ATTEMPTS TO INTERVENE IN FRANCE

Precisely at the same time when Louis XVI ineffectively attempted to get to the Marquis of Bouillé's troops, King Gustav III received good news from Stockholm. Gustaf Mauritz Armfelt informed the king that Empress Catherine II was ready to hand down the Nyslott fortress to the Swedish as well as to make an agreement which main aim would be the cooperation of the two allies in French matters and the restitution of the lost power to the King of France. Satisfied with the affaires as they were, the Swedish monarch predicted quick completion of negotiations, the more so that a special envoy of the St. Petersburg court, Peter A. von der Pahlen, set off in person to deliver the empress's personal letter to the king in Aachen. Impatiently awaiting effects of Louis XVI's escape, Gustav III made justified predictions about French affairs to have been definitely cleared up until General Pahlen's arrival, the fact which, in turn, should have made the competition of negotiations with St. Petersburg court easier and quicker. Also the Swedish king was not upset about the French royal family having been arrested while escaping from Paris. He expected that the latter fact must have caused such a deep crisis as regards international relations that the St. Petersburg court would have been forced to make an agreement with Sweden immediately. In his opinion, also the court of Berlin would be willing to support Louis XVI's affair. The hostile attitude of England as well as the possible protest of the emperor with regard to the plans of signing the Swedish-Russian alliance treaty could pose only obstacles in the way of restoring the old order in France. For the time being, however, the Swedish king was not going to be upset about that. On June 21, 1791 he left Aachen for Spa in order to stay closer to the "great affair" that was taking place in France⁹.

⁸ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, July 17 and 18, 1791, the apostille, RA, Gallica vol. 476; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 217–218.

⁹ See Gustav III to G.M. Armfelt, Aachen, June 21, 1791, *Konung Gustaf III:s bref till friherre G.M. Armfelt* [further on: *Bref till Armfelt*], E. Tegnér (ed.), in: *Historiska Handlingar*, vol. XII, Stockholm 1883, pp. 185–187. It is worth mentioning that the Swedish king deeply cared about the alliance with Catherine II, the reasons for that being not only political ones. In the same

The fact of Louis XVI having been arrested in Varennes significantly influenced later actions undertaken by Gustav III. Almost immediately after receiving the news of the royal family's unsuccessful escape, the Swedish monarch resolved to return to Aachen where he impatiently awaited the arrival of General Pahlen. This was so since the long-planned signing of a treaty with Catherine II seemed to him the only way to save the French monarchy. Thus, his further actions would depend upon the attitude of the St. Petersburg court. On June 27, 1791 the king wrote to Gustaf Mauritz Armfelt that he was returning to Sweden either within the following eight days or he would not come back at all that year. However, Gustav III did not intend to wait idly for the arrival of the Russian diplomat. On the same day, the monarch prepared the new instruction for his Ambassador to Paris, Eric Magnus Staël von Holstein. The instruction stated that all possible moves of the baron were to accord with the new policy of the Stockholm court towards France. Also, he forbade Staël to keep diplomatic relations with any person unauthorised to act by Louis XVI in person. He considered the French king a prisoner unable to dispose of his own fate and thus forbade Staël to participate in conferences with the so called "Foreign Minister". In the same document, Gustav III ordered his ambassador not to initiate any actions and thus adjust himself to other ambassadors' conduct. The ambassador was also ordered to support the royal party with all his might. Furthermore, Gustav III's instruction contained the statement that nothing pretended to be more incompatible with the affairs of the Swedish king than an agreement signed between Louis XVI and the National Assembly. The aim of the Swedish policy towards France was "to wrench the hydra's neck and restore the old order there". Thus, Staël was supposed to act in aid for restoring both, the French throne to the Bourbons and the fundamental laws of the monarchy

letter, he wrote to Armfelt: "La plus forte objection, la seule même raisonnable, qu'on pouvait faire contre une coalition de la Suède et de la Russie dans ce moment, était la crainte d'exposer notre commerce au ressentiment de l'Angleterre. Enfin, après treize ans de souhaits, je me verrai donc enfin lié avec seule souveraine qui soutient l'honneur des têtes couronnées". The interesting thing is that, getting prepared for assisting Louis XVI, Gustav III still did not lose sight of his efforts in obtaining the Polish crown while writing to Armfelt: "Les affaires de Pologne doivent être mises à côté; je ne regarde pas cela comme fini, mais le tems n'est pas encore arrivé où l'on se battra pour cette nouvelle Hélène qui porte une couronne en dot à son époux". See *ibidem*, p. 186. On the question of the then actions of Gustav III as regards France see also A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige...*, p. 233; N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, p. 56; C. T. Odhner, *Gustaf III och Katarina II efter freden i Värälä*, Stockholm 1895, pp. 33–34; E. Tegnér, *Gustaf Mauritz Armfelt. Studier ur Armfelts efterlemnade papper samt andra handskrifna och tryckta källor*, vol. I (*Armfelt och Gustaf III*), Stockholm 1883, p. 414; Z. Anusik, *The Beginnings of Counterrevolutionary Policy of King Gustavus III: The Stockholm Court and Louis XVI's Unsuccessful Escape from Paris in June 1791*, "Studia Maritima" 2002, vol. XV, pp. 93–122; idem, *Gustaw III w obozie kontrrewolucji. Stanowisko dworu sztokholmskiego wobec sytuacji we Francji po nieudanej ucieczce Ludwika XVI z Paryża w czerwcu 1791 r.*, "Przegląd Nauk Historycznych" 2003, vol. II, No. 1 (3), pp. 113–142.

as well as provide France with her autonomous status in the international arena. The interesting thing is that Gustav III cared about the ambassador's safety, too. He claimed that all was possible with the people who had not hesitated to raise their hand against their own king¹⁰. Thus, the royal instruction of June 27 clearly and precisely defined the aim of the Swedish policy towards France. Gustav III precluded any negotiations with French "rebels" and his intention was to fully restore the *ancien régime* in France.

It was Erik Bergstedt, the newly appointed Secretary of the Swedish embassy in France, who brought the instruction in question to Paris. Born as a minister's son in April 1760 in Strängnäs and having graduated from the Uppsala University, the young man worked for the *Kanslikollegium* for seven years. Appointed the Secretary of the embassy in St. Petersburg in 1786, the next year he was transferred to an equivalent position in Berlin. In 1790 he became one of Gustav III's closest associates accompanying the latter during his Finnish campaign when he proved to be a scrupulous and ardent executor of the king's orders. As early as February 1791 Bergstedt was appointed the Secretary of the Paris mission, at the time a vacancy. As the secretary he accompanied his monarch in his journey to Aachen. Bergstedt's appointment resulted from the fact of the transfer of the then legation Secretary, Aron Isak Silfversparre, to the Stockholm head office of the Swedish Foreign Service. It was from Silfversparre, who, incidentally, also accompanied the king during his journey to Spa and Aachen, that Bergstedt was supposed to take over the duty of Gustav III's trusted correspondent in Paris. After his arrival to Paris, Bergstedt commenced writing double reports, official and secret ones, the latter ones designed only for the king. Bergstedt's formal superior, Ambassador Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein, was by no means informed of the secret reports. The appointment of Bergstedt as the Secretary of the Paris legation must have been a purposeful move since Gustav III's resolution had been to send to Paris a man of radically conservative and monarchist views. Bergstedt fully came up to the king's expectations since he turned out to be an avowed enemy of the French revolution. What is more, his views quickly won him the support on the part of a few most trusted advisers of King Gustav III. Erik Bergstedt's protectors comprised Pehr Olof von Asp, Hans Axel von Fersen and Nils von Rosenstein as well as his predecessor, Aron Isak Silfversparre. All those people advocated the restoration of the old order in France. Before leaving Aachen, Bergstedt received from the king a separate instruction, yet, convergent with the instruction for the ambassador. The instruction ordered the Secretary of the Paris legation to counteract the development of the situation in France that would be

¹⁰ See Gustav III to G.M. Armfelt, Aachen, June 27, 1791, *Bref till Armfelt*, pp. 187–188. The contents of Gustav III's instruction for E.M. Staël v. Holstein dated June 27, 1791 as cited in A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige...*, pp. 256–257, 259–260.

unfavourable for Sweden's interests as well as to act in aid for restoring peace, order and stabilisation there. Erik Bergstedt was also assumed to have brought Gustav III's personal letter to Louis XVI to Paris. In the letter, the Swedish king expressed his sympathy for the French monarch and, at the same time, assured the latter of his and other monarchs' constant assistance in Louis XVI's misfortune¹¹.

Writing the letter to Louis XVI on June 30, 1791, Gustav III had just finished his long talk with Hans Axel von Fersen. It was Fersen who, as the only person among the participants of the royal escape from Paris, avoided being arrested in Varennes. This was so since as near as Bourguet, Fersen received an order from Louis XVI to straggle from the king's escort in order to deliver the monarch's letters to Monsieur Louis, Count of Provence, at that time escaping towards the Belgian border. The order saved Fersen. On June 22 at 6 a.m. he arrived in Mons where he encountered the king's brother with his own retinue. On the same day, Fersen wrote to Evert Taube informing him about the escape of the royal family from Paris. Late at night on that day he left Mons expecting to catch up with the fugitives soon. The next day, at about 11 p.m., Count Fersen arrived in Arlon where he unexpectedly met the Marquis of Bouillé from whom he learnt that the royal family had been arrested in Varennes. On the very same day Hans Axel von Fersen wrote a letter to his father where he stated: "It's all over, my dear Sir and I'm in utter despair. The king was arrested in Varennes, 16 miles from the border". In the face of such a sudden collapse of all his plans and hopes, Fersen (acting according to Louis XVI's earlier instruction) resolved to go to Brussels so as to present the former Austrian Ambassador to Paris, the Count of Mercy-Argenteau, still in contact with the organisers of the escape, with the letters of the French king. On June 25, 1791 Fersen arrived to Brussels where he had his first talk with the Austrian diplomat. However, in spite of all his hopes, it turned out that the Austrian had done nothing to help with the execution of the plan worked out back in Paris in cooperation with the Baron of Breteuil. Not a single troop had been moved towards the French border and François de Mercy-Argenteau received no instructions from Leopold II except for two letters addressed to the Queen of France that he was supposed to hand down to Marie Antoinette after her arrival in the

¹¹ See A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige...*, pp. 257–259, 281–282; G. Jacobson, *Bergstedt Erik*, in: *Svenskt Biografiskt Lexikon* [further on: *SBL*], vol. III, Stockholm 1922, pp. 672–678; *Den introducerade svenska adelns ättartavlor*, G. Elgenstierna (ed.), vol. I, Stockholm 1925, p. 349; L. Bernesjö, *Rosenstein Nils (Rosén) von*, in: *Svenska Män och Kvinnor. Biografisk Uppslagsbok* [further on: *SMoK*], vol. VI, Stockholm 1949, pp. 345–346. See also Gustav III to Louis XVI, Aachen, June 30, 1791, *Rescue the Queen*, pp. 38–39. The same letter is also cited by A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige...*, pp. 242–243. See also Z. Anusik, *The Beginnings...*, pp. 122–123; idem, *Gustav III w obozie...*, pp. 142–143.

capital of Malines. That light-heartedness of the emperor appalled Fersen who wrote in his diary: "Leopold acted like a typical Italian". Yet, Fersen still hoped things could be done to rescue the French royal family from the situation that he partly blamed himself for. Since then, a personal safety of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette became one of his priorities. Archduchess Maria Christina, Governess of the Austrian Netherlands suggested the count that he should go to Vienna and seek the emperor's direct assistance for Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI. Fersen immediately took up the idea. At the same time his friend, James Quentin Craufurd, suggested his own going to London to strive for the French Bourbons at the court of St. James as well. What is more, while in Brussels, Fersen also talked to Louis XVI's youngest brother, Charles, Count of Artois. However, the latter made no positive impression on the Swedish diplomat who considered the royal relative lordly careless and excessively short-tempered¹².

However, Fersen was unable to take up any diplomatic actions without Gustav III's consent. Therefore, he left Brussels after several days and as early as June 29, 1791 he turned up in Aachen where he met his king on the following day. At first, the monarch wished Fersen to undertake the mission at the London court. Yet, Fersen suggested sending Craufurd there as the latter one agreed to go to England earlier on. The count also managed to convince Gustav III to the idea of sending an envoy to the court of Vienna. Needless to say, the only serious candidate for the role of an envoy of the Swedish king was Fersen himself. While being in Aachen Fersen encountered many of his old acquaintances and friends; yet, he enjoyed the meeting with Evert Taube most since the latter one fully shared his conviction of the necessity to rescue the French royal family. On June 30 Catherine II's special envoy, General Peter von der Pahlen, turned up in Aachen, too. In the early July 1791 it was Taube, Fersen and Pahlen who comprised the group of Gustav III's most trusted advisers and trustees as regards French matters. Also the King of Sweden continued keeping in touch with French princes who temporarily moved to the Schönbornslust Castle near Koblenz. As late

¹² See Fersen's Diary: Mons, June 22, Arlon, June 23, Brussels, June 25 and 28, 1791, *Rescue the Queen*, pp. 31–34; *Axel von Fersens dagbok* [further on: *Fersens dagbok*], A. Söderhjelm (ed.), vol. I, Stockholm 1925, pp. 82–85; H.A. v. Fersen to E. Taube, Mons, June 22, 1791, RA, Stafsundsarkivet, Evert Taubes Samling, vol. II; H.A. v. Fersen to A.F. v. Fersen, Arlon, June 23, 1791, *Rescue the Queen*, p. 32. The same letter see *Le comte de Fersen et la cour de France. Extraits des papiers du grand maréchal de Suède, comte Jean Axel de Fersen* [further on: *Fersen et la cour de France*], R.M. Klinckowström (ed.), vol. I, Paris 1877, p. 140. See also Gustav III to G.M. Armfelt, Aachen, June 27, 1791, *Bref till Armfelt*, p. 187; A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige...*, p. 234; N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, p. 62. It is worth mentioning that as early as June 27, 1791 Fersen sent his subordinate and friend, Lieutenant (Staff Captain in the Swedish army) Anders Fredrik Reuterswärd, to Paris to inform Fersen on the development of the situation in France. See H.A. Barton, *op. cit.*, p. 127; Z. Anusik, *The Beginnings...*, pp. 124–125; idem, *Gustaw III w obozie...*, pp. 143–145.

as June 20, 1791 the Count of Artois wrote to Gustav III from there saying he appreciated the king's remembrance and concern shown since his exile began and he was sending Jean François, Baron of Escars to represent him at the king's side. In the same letter, the count assured the Swedish monarch that all true Frenchmen, that is the majority of the nation, were ready to spill blood for the right cause awaiting only the help on the part of the allies and friends. Sending the king his sincere greetings for his suggestion to cooperate in restoring order and punishing crime in France, the Count of Artois did not forget to mention that Gustav III's letter to the Baron von Brentano, a Swedish envoy to Turkey, significantly facilitated actions of the French emigrants in Istanbul. The contacts with Koblenz became even more tangible for the Swedish king when the older brother of the Count of Artois, Louis, Count of Provence, joined the latter in his actions. This was so since on June 30, 1791 both brothers of Louis XVI, who were staying among emigrants at the time, resolved that in the face of the king's having been imprisoned in Paris Monsieur would temporarily become a regent¹³.

Gustav III immediately approved of the princes' decision. In his letter to Gustaf Mauritz Armfelt dated July 7, 1791 the Swedish king called the Count of Provence a "French regent". He carefully observed the endeavours of French emigrants who took up the effort to obtain military reinforcements from German princes at the time. His further actions were supposed to depend upon the results of the latter talks. The king expected to lead the army that the German would have at the disposal of the French emigrants. He assured Armfelt that he only lacked a sufficiently numerous army to wage a war against the revolutionary France. His greatest concern, however, was the effect of Stockholm negotiations with the St. Petersburg court. Obtaining Russian subsidies comprised a *sine qua non* condition to succeed in the operation he had planned. Therefore, as early as July 9 Gustav III presented Pahlen with a memorial for Catherine II. The memorial stated that Louis XVI's case should have been treated as the case concerning each and every European ruler. Encouraging the empress to participate in tackling with the case, Gustav III asked her for financial support and for providing him with 6–8 thousand Russian soldiers for his planned expedition against France. The interesting thing is that the king warned his cousin not to put

¹³ See Fersen's Diary: Aachen, June 30, 1791, *Rescue the Queen*, p. 38; *Fersens dagbok*, p. 85; A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige...*, pp. 242, 246; Charles, Count of Artois to Gustav III, *Schönbornslust*, June 20, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 521; N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, p. 65; A. Geffroy, *Gustave III et la cour de France. Suivi d'une étude critique sur Marie-Antoinettes et Louis XVI apocryphes*, vol. II, Paris 1867, pp. 167–169; Z. Anusik, *The Beginnings...*, pp. 125–126; idem, *Gustaw III w obozie...*, pp. 145–146. For more information on the circumstances which contributed to moving the Count of Artois' residence from Turin to Koblenz see J. Godechot, *La contre-révolution française. Doctrine et action. 1789–1804*, Paris 1961, pp. 166–167.

her hopes in military possibilities of the French emigrants. On the other hand, the king himself stayed in the closest possible contact with the latter ones. He was assuring the Count of Provence of his own will to support the count's actions at German courts. Appreciating the king for his initiative, Monsieur wrote back that negotiations in which the Swedish monarch participated would undoubtedly succeed and other rulers would follow his example. Maintaining his good relations with the princes' court in Koblenz, Gustav III began wondering whether it would be better for him to openly opt for the emigrant party against the weak, wavering and inconsequent King of France. On July 10, 1791 the Swedish king wrote to Curt von Stedingk that the question of who should have reigned in France, Louis XVI or one of his brothers, Louis XVII or Charles X, was worth serious reconsideration¹⁴. Even if Gustav III ever thought of Louis XVI's dethroning, that was just a fleeting impression.

The Swedish monarch set forth the principles of his policy towards France in an extended letter to Gustaf Mauritz Armfelt and Ulric Gustaf Franc dated July 10, 1791. He wrote that his only aim at that moment was to think up the ways of prompting Catherine II's decision as regards Russia's help for the French emigrants. As to his part, he had already taken up appropriate steps since he had resolved to send Hans Axel, Count von Fersen to Vienna in order to put pressure upon both, the emperor and Wenzel Anton, Prince von Kaunitz. Similarly, Baron Carl Gustaf Oxenstierna (a Swedish envoy to Regensburg) was authorised to support the French princes in their negotiations concerning conditions of hiring the Elector Palatine of the Rhine's troops to wage the war against the revolutionary France. Count Nils Anton Barck was also supposed to be sent soon with the mission to enlist the Landgrave von Hesse-Kassel's soldiers in the service of the French emigrants. However, Gustav III's all plans depended on the result of the Stockholm negotiations. Therefore, the Swedish monarch ordered his negotiators to give up pushing the idea to correct the Russian borderline and to cease their claims concerning St. Petersburg's yielding the towns of Valkeala and Kärnäkoski providing the empress agreed to appropriately subsidise the military excursion against France. Gustav III's main concern was to sign an alliance treaty with Russia as soon as possible since every delay must have also stalled a possible interference in France's internal affairs up to as late as the spring of the following year. The king expected the Ostend port to pose the best place for beaching Swedish and Russian intervention troops. He doubted if any French port would be suitable for the operation. Writing his letter on July 10, 1791, Gustav III had no information yet at his disposal concerning England's

¹⁴ See Gustav III to G.M. Armfelt, Aachen, July 7, 1791, *Bref till Armfelt*, pp. 188–189; A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige...*, pp. 249, 251–254; Louis, Count of Provence to Gustav III, Schönbornslust, July 6, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 521; N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, pp. 65, 84.

possible position towards his planned excursion. Still, he thought that the London court was particular only about saving time and it did not have precise political plans towards Sweden or France. The interesting thing is that the Swedish king was optimistic about the latter and thus expected the possible beginning of the war against French rebels as soon as possible. He ordered the Stockholm government to commence actions concerning the question of his regency when he was away, assembling military troops bound to participate in the expedition and providing the appropriate number of ships to take the latter next to the French border as soon as the Russian treaty was signed¹⁵.

On July 12, 1791 Eric Bergstedt's first message from Paris reached Aachen. The new Secretary of the Swedish mission in Paris wrote about the rumour of Louis XVI's having offered his acknowledgement for the constitution before the National Assembly as well as his promise given to the latter about bringing back all emigrants providing all his postulates were accepted. The royal offer was to extend the scope of his power and to withdraw the most controversial decrees of the National Constituent Assembly. However, Bergstedt himself doubted whether the royal postulates had been accepted since they proved contradictory to the ideas cherished by most deputies and the public opinion. Thus, Bergstedt's report was of no interest to Gustav III since his attention concentrated upon quite different problems. On July 14 the king wrote another letter to Gustaf Mauritz Armfelt in which he expressed his predictions concerning the development of the affaires in the international arena. He totally rejected the possibility of signing an alliance with the court of Copenhagen that his most trusted adviser, Anders Håkansson, suggested to him, although several months before he had been willing to accept that. On the other hand, he thought that there were no difficulties in signing a subsidy treaty with Spain. In his opinion, the Madrid court, having anxiously observed the development of the situation in France, at the same time remaining in the state of escalating conflict with England, should have been interested in deepening its relation with both, Sweden and the latter's new ally, the Empress of Russia¹⁶.

¹⁵ See Gustav III to G.M. Armfelt and U.G. Franc, Aachen, July 10, 1791, *Bref till Armfelt*, pp. 189–191. As regards the concessions to the empress, the king wrote: "il faut être aussi généreux que l'Impératrice et sacrifier quelques rochers pour secourir une maison royale opprimée". See *ibidem*, p. 190. As regards the obstacles put in the way of Gustav III's using French ports, the king wrote: "puisque'il est incertain si l'on pourra se saisir de quelque port de France, depuis que la fuite et l'arrestation du roi ont éveillé un esprit de surveillance et d'inquiétude qui pourra déchacer de semblables projets". See *ibidem* and N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, p. 86; Z. Anusik, *The Beginnings...*, pp. 126–128; idem, *Gustaw III w obozie...*, pp. 146–148.

¹⁶ See E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris, July 6, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 476; Gustav III to G.M. Armfelt, Aachen, July 14, 1791, *Bref till Armfelt*, pp. 192–193.

In the same letter, Gustav III wrote also about his plans concerning his internal policy. He was convincing his closest informers that the first and foremost thing would be to suppress the Swedish democratic opposition. To his mind, everywhere "Jacobins" appeared they were expected to abolish the existing order. The latter fact brought Gustav III to a paradoxical conclusion. Namely, according to the king's standards, in order to calm the situation in Sweden, strong position of the monarch should have been restored in France since the latter would provide Sweden with regular payment of French subsidies (as stated by the, now expired, treaty of July 19, 1784). The king expected that the latter payments would be easily resumed after *ancien régime* principles were restored in France. Another aim of Gustav III's internal policy was the agreement with the anti-royal opposition of liberal aristocracy. The latter was supposed to prevent both, internal unrest and the tendency of three unprivileged estates to further limit privileges of the nobility. The king considered the agreement with the nobility opposition to be difficult, yet possible. However, he expected he would be able to summon a new *Riksdag* and commence talks with the representatives of the opposition no sooner than French affairs were ultimately regulated. Also he was extremely concerned about the question of Russian negotiations, in particular about the problem of the paragraph stating the amount of Russian subsidies for Sweden. In the king's opinion, the yearly amount of 500 thousand roubles would suit both parties. If, however, St. Petersburg court insisted on the insertion of the paragraph stating the mutual action against Prussia into the treaty, then Catherine II should, in Gustav III's opinion, throw in another yearly amount of 500 thousand roubles, the latter still unsatisfactory to compensate Sweden for its Turkish subsidies lost at the moment of signing a peace treaty with Russia. Another interesting fact is that Gustav III ordered Armfelt to make efforts to ensure the payment of additional means by the empress in order to finance the king's privy purse. All the above proves Gustav III's critical financial situation at the time since even the most trusted advisers of the king suggested his summoning of a new *Riksdag*. Still, the king outright rejected such a possibility. Having had a choice to face the increasing internal opposition or to organise a monarchist crusade against the revolutionary France he, without hesitation, opted for the latter solution¹⁷.

Preparing to intervene in France, Gustav III seriously considered providing the French royal family with the minimal safety. Thus, he ordered Erik Bergstedt to try to directly contact the king and the queen. On July 17 a reply from the Secretary of the Paris mission came to Aachen. Bergstedt wrote that due to the present crisis, he had had no chance yet to be introduced

¹⁷ See Gustav III to G.M. Armfelt, Aachen, July 14, 1791, *Bref till Armfelt*, pp. 193–196.

to neither the Foreign Minister nor the diplomatic corps. Therefore, having received no formal accreditation at the Paris court, he had been unable to seek audience in the Tuileries. Furthermore, he had never imagined himself getting *incognito* into the palace since the royal couple was well guarded and only people included in a special list made by Louis XVI and approved by his guardians were let in. Supposedly, Bergstedt did not intend to venture an arbitrary intrusion into the royal seat. Later on in his message, he wrote that each person suspected of intriguing in order to liberate the king would be unmercifully hanged on a lamppost. He also claimed that Count Fersen was extremely lucky to have avoided the fury of the mob and that he should never return to Paris again. Describing the atmosphere in France, Bergstedt wrote that the National Assembly was ready to protect its country against any foreign intervention. However, they feared no invasion for there was a common conviction that any intervening party would be defeated with their own weapons, namely by winning soldiers over to the side of the revolution. According to the Swedish diplomat, Paris was of an opinion that no anti-French league would be formed. This was so since, in the French opinion, the emperor was absorbed exclusively with his Turkish negotiations in Sistova, the Prussian king was busy with the Turkish and the Polish problems and the German princes were too weak and too partitioned to comprise any jeopardy to the revolution. Completely ignoring the possibility of Italian little states and Spain, the National Assembly's sole problem was England which might have seized French colonies. In the same message, Bergstedt wrote that since Gustav III's arrival to Aachen the town was considered the centre for the counterrevolution and the seat of plots directed against the freedom of France. However, for fear of the Swedish king commanding the rulers' armed excursion against the revolution, the Secretary of the Paris mission assured his monarch that both parties overcoming one another in the National Constituent Assembly would strive for his favour. Also Bergstedt was convinced that the first power to ally with the National Assembly would benefit from that arrangement. Yet, knowing Gustav III's disposition, he had never even attempted to suggest Sweden to comprise a party in the latter arrangement¹⁸.

Meanwhile, Gustav III was progressing in his plans to intervene in France in the future. In Aachen he met the Marquis of Bouillé who had already attempted to cooperate with Louis XVI's brothers (under no definite obligation, though). At the meeting held by the king, the marquis and Evert Taube, the three men decided about the details concerning the cooperation of the Swedish army and the French emigrants. Normandy was chosen a beaching

¹⁸ See E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris, July 11, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 476. See also A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige...*, p. 287; N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, p. 60; Z. Anusik, *The Beginnings...*, pp. 128–130; idem, *Gustav III w obozie...*, pp. 148–151.

place of Gustav III's troops. If, however, beaching was impossible in some of French ports, then Swedish troops were to land in Belgian Ostend. The king approved of the second solution, which he considered more realistic. His plans of the future campaign (worked out with the help of Evert Taube) assumed that the troops participating in the French excursion would gather in Øresund or Gothenburg to be transferred later on to Ostend. Gustav III expected the excursion to begin as early as August 1791. The General Marquis of Bouillé, was also optimistic in that matter. He was sure that Swedish troops would soon appear near the French border. The latter was also the reason for his son's, young Count Louis Joseph, joining the Swedish army whereas the marquis himself commenced working out the ordnance plans of the future military operations¹⁹. In the mid-July 1791 neither Gustav III nor the Marquis of Bouillé could have known that their French plans were to be postponed. The Stockholm negotiations had brought no expected effects by the time. Clearly, Catherine II was playing for time sending to Stockholm instructions stiffening the position of her Russian negotiators. Not only did the empress refuse to make concessions to Sweden as regards the border corrections but also she made no hopes for the payment of the subsidies without which Sweden was helpless as regards its plans to intervene in France. Thus, Gustaf Mauritz Armfelt's warnings about the uncertainty of the excursion's success due to the weakness of the emigrants seemed justified. Also Gustav III's most trusted adviser wrote to the king that the Swedish army and navy would be ready for action as late as the end of October. Armfelt was sceptical about the king's plans from the very beginning and thus expressed his doubts about the success of the entire undertaking due to the strong domestic opposition as well as the unwillingness to act on the part of other European rulers²⁰.

¹⁹ See A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige...*, pp. 248–250; eadem, *Revolutionärer och emigranter*, Stockholm 1918, p. 81; eadem, *Fersen et Marie-Antoinette. Journal intime et correspondance du comte Axel de Fersen*, Paris 1930, p. 199; N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, pp. 57, 71, 110.

²⁰ The following statements were included in Catherine II's letter to Otto Magnus von Stackelberg who *nota bene* passed the letter on to Armfelt: "Mais s'il faut enfin venir à quelque troc de frontière, il est nécessaire que l'égalité sert de base, car je ne veux ni perdre, ni gagner; et je vous defends expressément d'entrer en aucune espèce de discussion sur la cession de Högfors, puisque l'opinion publique a fait considérer cet endroit comme nécessaire à notre défense. A l'égard de l'argent, vous connaissez mes finances tout aussi bien que moi. Je peux faire des envois pour mon ami et mon parent, mais je n'ai rien en commun avec les finances et les dettes de la Suède". See G.M. Armfelt to Gustav III, Stockholm, July 17, 1791, *Bref till Armfelt*, p. 189. For a detailed discussion of the Stockholm negotiations and Catherine II's position towards France see C.T. Odhner, *op. cit.*, pp. 34–37; I. de Madariaga, *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great*, New Haven–London 1981, p. 422; K.E. Dzedzula, *Rossija i velikaja francuzskaja buržuaznaja revolucija konca XVIII veka*, Kijev 1972, p. 296. The documents quoted by researchers state that the empress was ready to take up actions aimed to restore France's place

Before Armfelt's warnings reached Gustav III the latter one commenced an extended diplomatic action. Armfelt informed the king on such plans in his letter dated July 10, 1791. Within the next dozen or so days the royal plans were carried into effect. According to the previous arrangements, Hans Axel, Count von Fersen had been sent to Vienna. An equally important mission had been entrusted with Evert Taube who was sent to Koblenz where Louis XVI's two younger brothers stayed. Fersen did not like the king's idea of the French emigrants' playing the most significant role in the future intervention in France, next to Austria, Russia and Sweden. Marie Antoinette's most trusted friend was thinking of restoring the full power to the French royal couple and thus opted against the princes whom he considered a real jeopardy for Louis XVI. However, Gustav III did not care about his diplomat's sulking, thus, consequently executing the plan he and Evert Taube had agreed upon. Since the secret preliminary convention signed in Stockholm on May 24 stated that apart from 16 thousand Swedes and eight thousand Russians also 12 thousand Hessian soldiers would participate in the French excursion, Count Nils Anton Barck left for Kassel in order to negotiate the conditions of hiring the landgrave's troops. That task proved extremely difficult for the young diplomat since it was the London court that was supposed to provide funds for the undertaking. The point was, however, that Gustav III wrote to his envoy in London, Gustaf Adam von Nolcken, ordering him to take up efforts to obtain English subsidies for the Hessian Landgrave at Kassel only as late as July 18, 1791. While in Aachen, the Swedish king also thought about asking the Bavarian elector for help. Thus, he ordered Baron Carl Gustaf Oxenstierna, a Swedish envoy to Regensburg, to go to Munich where the latter one was supposed to take up efforts to obtain military reinforcements against the revolutionary France. Furthermore, on July 16, Gustav III wrote the letter to King of Spain, Charles IV, announcing sending 16 thousand own soldiers to France and asking the Madrid court about a subsidy of 12 million *livres*. Initiating his instalment of the anti-French coalition, the Swedish king did not forget about the Berlin court, either. On July 23, 1791 the king's envoy to Berlin, Christian Ehrenfried von Carisien, was ordered to induce Prussia to join the planned league of rulers that was to claim Louis XVI's violated laws. James Quentin Craufurd, sent on the same day from Aachen to London, received the same order with regard to the London court²¹.

among other European powers. Thus, she agreed to offer Gustav III 500 thousand roubles as a yearly subsidy as well as ten thousand soldiers. On the question of Armfelt's position towards the king's French excursion see A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige...*, pp. 261–262.

²¹ See A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige...*, pp. 247, 250–251; N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, pp. 68–69, 72–76, 80–81; Z. Anusik, *The Beginnings...*, pp. 131–133; idem, *Gustaw III w obozie...*, pp. 150–154.

Sending his envoys to the courts he assumed to assist him in his undertakings, Gustav III commenced the preparations for his return to Sweden since he realised that the French excursion would not be possible but within a few following months. On the eve of his departure the king received another message from Erik Bergstedt. The Secretary of the Paris mission wrote what follows: "Two Swedish officers, Fieandt and König, came to me yesterday to tell me that Your Majesty had sent them here with the mission to learn how the Seine runs from Paris down to Le Havre and that Baron Wrede had warned them, according to Your Majesty's order, to inform me about it. Since I had received no earlier orders on that I was very embarrassed with the signs of such a trust. However, I did not hesitate to warn them and provide them with the maps of new departments published soon after the revolution's outbreak. That was the only thing I could do for them for I do not know about the country well enough yet to give them any useful information. Neither did I dare to mix up with the matters which could prove very unpleasant if they were detected". As much as Captain Fieandt and Cornet König's mission was a surprise to Bergstedt, it turned out no surprise to the Swedish king. As early as June he ordered Armfelt to send two cartographers to France to reconnoitre the road from Havre to Paris. Gustav III expected the road would soon lead his soldiers to help the tormented Louis XVI. For the time being, he had to look up to his other business. On July 25, 1791 Gustav III left Aachen for Sweden²². Since that moment his primary concern as regards the king's foreign policy was the installation of the monarchist coalition against the revolutionary France.

THE KOBLENZ MISSION OF EVERT TAUBE AND THE SWEDISH DIPLOMACY'S EFFORTS TO OBTAIN THE SUPPORT OF THE GERMAN PRINCES

Probably it was Evert Taube who, among all Swedish diplomats sent from Aachen in July 1791, had received the most difficult task. He was, in fact, to convince Louis XVI's brothers to comply with the military and political leadership of Gustav III. According to the king's instruction, Taube was to make both princes recognise the ruler of Sweden as a leader of the league which would aim at restoring the old order in France. He was also to ensure that all German troops that the princes would receive from the Reich, especially the Hessian army, were united under the direct command of Gustav III or, at least, were placed in the areas he would consider as best for the planned project. The king's envoy was also ordered to persuade the

²² See E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris, July 18, 1791, apostille, RA, Gallica vol. 476; A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige...*, p. 260; N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, pp. 84, 132–133, Z. Anusik, *The Beginnings...*, p. 134; idem, *Gustav III w obozie...*, p. 154.

princes to fully submit to Gustav III's will and to dissuade them from taking any diplomatic or military steps without the latter's knowledge and permission. Gustav III wished the princes sent their representative to his court. The chosen representative was to be wise and educated and his background should enable him to establish close relationship with the king without raising any suspicion on the part of his retinue. Gustav III wanted, in fact, the envoy in question not to have any official diplomatic status, thus, playing the role of a traveller. What is more, Taube received an order to persuade the princes to write letters to the rulers of Spain and Sardinia, as well as the emperor, as to convince them that the princes trusted the Swedish king and had asked him to take the lead of the planned anti-French league. They were also to ask the above-mentioned rulers to support Gustav III's actions and decisions. The king's instruction ended with the following words: "as it is the most important to avoid any ceremonial obstacles in the future and the king is no longer willing to stay *incognito*, Baron Taube should warn the princes that during a personal meeting the king will treat the French king's brothers as his own and the representatives of the House of Condé as the ambassadors of the crowned heads or even better"²³.

On July 29, 1791 Evert Taube, following the king's instruction, arrived to Schönbornslust near Koblenz which was the headquarters of the Count of Provence and the Count of Artois. The most important persons in the princes' retinue were Louis XVI's former ministers, Charles Alexandre de Calonne, who watched over their finances, and Marshal Victor François de Broglie, who acted as the Minister of War. Also Louis de Conzié, a former Bishop of Arras, was highly trusted by Louis XVI's brothers. Taube was to negotiate with the former Bishop of Arras and Calonne. From the very beginning it was clear that the Swedish diplomat would not be able to carry out any of the tasks that his king had assigned to him. Neither the princes nor their ministers intended to submit to Gustav III's leadership. They wanted to preserve their full independence and were consistently aspiring to be equal partners for the ruler of Sweden. Such an attitude made Taube angry and very critical of the princes' advisers, especially Charles de Calonne, whom he blamed for the failure of the negotiations that had taken place at the turn of July and August. Having heard nothing more but empty declarations of the princes' friendship and the affection to the King of Sweden, in the first days of August Evert Taube left Koblenz for Hamburg. Only from there, on August 6 (according to A. Söderhjelm) or August 8 (according to N. Åkeson), did he inform Gustav III about his failure talks with the French princes²⁴.

²³ See Gustav III's instruction for Evert Taube, no place and date, RA, Stafsundsarkivet, Evert Taubes Samling, vol. I.

²⁴ See A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige...*, pp. 231, 260–261; N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, pp. 90–91.

Taube's failed mission in Koblenz was a direct result of actions taken by Louis XVI's brothers at the court of William IX, Landgrave von Hesse-Kassel. This was so since during the talks with Gustav III's envoy both princes were convinced that they would have at their disposal a fairly large armed force completely independent of the Swedish king. On June 21, 1791 a representative of French emigrants, Baron Wachter, established with the landgrave future conditions of the latter's agreement with the Count of Artois. According to that agreement, the ruler of Hesse-Kassel was to send to the count 12 thousand soldiers who were to help to restore order and peace in France. Yet, Hessian troops were to cooperate with the emperor and other German princes. The emperor was to guarantee that the Count of Artois would fulfil all commitments he had accepted in the name of the King of France. Finally, the emperor was to provide the contracting parties with sufficiently strong military support thanks to which it would be possible to restore the old order in France. The landgrave demanded auxiliary German troops (the so-called district army) to be under his command if only they were to be used against France. What is more, he was to be immediately granted 12 thousand *écus* (60 thousand *livres*) and to receive a permanent subsidy of three million *livres* a year while the Hessian army was to be entirely paid by the French king. The landgrave and the King of France were to settle their accounts after Hessian soldiers had entered Paris. Yet, before taking any action, the landgrave demanded to be paid in advance so as to cover the costs of the future campaign. At the same time he promised to move his forces within six weeks after having received the emperor's letter with the desired guarantees²⁵.

Three days later, on June 24, 1791, Baron Wachter sent the Count of Artois a report describing his talks with the landgrave. He wrote that the ruler of Hesse-Kassel would prefer to sign a treaty with the emperor rather than negotiate with the French emigrants. He also warned his correspondent that should the expiring in September Hessian-English subsidy treaty be renewed, negotiations on hiring Hessian troops would become more difficult. According to the treaty of 1776, the London court promised to pay to the landgrave war subsidies of 500 thousand *écus* (2,5 million *livres*) which could be even increased to the amount of six million *livres* a year. Wachter could not submit a counteroffer as the French emigrants did not have enough money to negotiate with the landgrave. Their only advantage was the wealth of France. For the time being the landgrave, still anticipating future profits, was ready to accept a subsidy of 36 thousand pounds sterling (two million *livres*). Wachter tried to convince the Count of Artois that such an amount

²⁵ For more information about the conditions on which the Landgrave von Hesse-Kassel was willing to make an agreement with the Count of Artois see a copy of a preliminary agreement signed in Montcheri, June 21, 1791, RA, Huvudarkivet, Kabinettet/UD, B1B, vol. 133.

(that the landgrave had been paid by the English so far) was absolutely essential for a normal functioning of Hesse. The baron also claimed that even if all other requests of the landgrave (namely that the intervention corps was to be paid and equipped by the French) were to be met, it would be impossible to get cheaper and better soldiers elsewhere. He informed his correspondent that William IX had already started preparations for the expedition and had given orders to arrange transport for the artillery. On that occasion, Wachter announced his trip to Hanau where he was to meet with the Count of Artois as to arrange last details before finalising the negotiations²⁶. Although in the following weeks little progress was made (the main obstacle was the chronic lack of money in the princes' treasury), French emigrants did not intend to voluntarily give up the idea of Hessian auxiliary troops being at their disposal.

Gustav III could not have predicted such a course of events. From the beginning, he believed that both princes would eagerly accept his leading role in the future anti-French league. Thus, in his instruction of July 17, 1791 that he had prepared in Aachen for Count Nils Anton Barck, he ordered his envoy to support actions taken up by the French emigrants at the landgrave's court. He also suggested the Swedish diplomat to try to facilitate negotiations between the Hessian court and the court of St. James. This was so since Gustav III came up with the idea that it should be the English court to give the funds necessary for emigrants to hire the landgrave's troops. On July 22 Count Barck arrived in Kassel where almost immediately he was presented to William IX. The Swedish diplomat soon came into the possession of a report on the talks that Baron Wachter had held with the Hessian government. Thus, the Swedish-Hessian negotiations were to start from the conditions on which the envoy of the French emigrants had agreed with the landgrave. The only difference was that Barck insisted on the Hessian government's renewing the subsidy treaty with England as soon as possible. Yet, Gustav III's envoy to Kassel did not achieve any significant success. The landgrave wanted to wait and did not intend to make any binding decision before having discussed it with Vienna and London. The attitude of the English court completely surprised the Swedish diplomacy. The British government dissuaded the landgrave from interfering with the affairs of the revolutionary France. As a result, the mission of Nils Anton Barck turned out to be a complete failure. In the first days of August Barck left Kassel. On August 9, 1791 he sent Gustav III a final report on his unsuccessful mission to the landgrave's court²⁷.

²⁶ See Baron Wachter to Charles, Count of Artois, Embs near Koblenz, June 24, 1791 (a copy), *ibidem*. It is worth mentioning that Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein's *écu-to-livre* conversion was 1:3, whereas Baron Wachter's 1:5.

²⁷ See N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, pp. 92–94.

Equally unsuccessful was the mission of which Gustav III had initially high hopes. On July 7, 1791 the king prepared instructions for the Swedish envoy to the Parliament of the Reich in Regensburg, Baron Carl Gustaf Oxenstierna. He assigned him a task to win for the anti-French league the support of old Charles Theodore, Elector Palatine of the Rhine and Bavaria. The Swedish king suspected that the rich leader of the House of Wittelsbachs would support him with troops and money that neither he nor supported by him the French emigrants had. Immediately after having received the king's orders, on July 14, 1791, Oxenstierna left Regensburg and on July 18 arrived to Munich. Later that day, however, he left the capital of Bavaria for the Neuenburg Castle where the elector was staying at the time. Then, official talks of the elector and the Swedish king's envoy began. From the very beginning, Charles Theodore was sceptical towards the Swedish diplomat's projects. What is more, the state of his country did not allow him to make hasty and ill-considered decisions. According to Oxenstierna, the elector had at his disposal an army of 12–14 thousand soldiers. That number could be increased to 30 thousand at best. It was an armed force sufficient to maintain order in electoral estates as well as to fulfil Charles Theodore's commitments as a Prince of the German Reich. Yet, Bavarian forces were far from sufficient to start an armed conflict with France. Oxenstierna tried to convince Charles Theodore that he could count on great benefits after having suppressed the French revolution but in fact he could not find any convincing argument to support his views. Thus, the elector was not interested in the offer submitted to him and decided to wait for the emperor and other leading European powers' decision. Oxenstierna had nothing else to do but leave Bavaria. On August 18, 1791 he sent the king a final report on his talks with the elector²⁸.

THE AUSTRIAN MISSION OF HANS AXEL VON FERSEN

The results of missions to Koblenz, Kassel and Munich had only confirmed that neither the French emigrants nor the German princes intended to take any action against France without the consent, knowledge and cooperation of the Vienna court. Thus, the success of all the plans prepared during the Swedish king's stay in Aachen was to depend on the emperor's support for the case. At first it seemed that Gustav III would reach an agreement with Leopold II as regards French matters. The emperor's reaction to the news about the French royal family's successful escape from Paris was promising. After having heard the news (Leopold II who was staying in Italy and could not have known that reports from the French capital were untrue), the emperor wrote a passionate letter to Marie Antoinette in which he praised

²⁸ For more information about Carl Gustaf Oxenstierna's mission to the Bavarian court see *ibidem*, pp. 95–101.

his sister for having saved the king, the country and almost all European monarchies. He ended with those words: "All I have is Yours: money, troops, everything, indeed". A few days later, on July 6, 1791, when he had already heard the news of the arrest of Louis XVI in Varennes, the emperor sent from Padua a circular letter to the most important European rulers (Gustav III excluded) urging them to support him "in word and deed in restoring freedom and honour to the Most Christian King and his family and putting an end to dangerous excesses of the French revolution". What is more, after having returned to Vienna he ordered to tell the French Ambassador, the Marquis of Noailles, he should not appear at court as long as Louis XVI's rights as the king were suspended²⁹.

At the same time Leopold II was holding meetings with the envoy of the Prussian court with whom he had already started talks in June. He was mercilessly taking advantage over an inexperienced diplomat, Johann Rudolf Bischoffwerder, forcing him to make more and more concessions. Thus, the content of the preliminaries of the Prussian-Austrian alliance treaty signed in Vienna on July 25, 1791 differed from instructions handed to Bischoffwerder in Berlin. The document did not even mention the possibility of both courts' action against Russia. Since in July 1791 there still existed (although only in theory) a possibility of the outbreak of war between Russia and the Triple Alliance countries, the treaty that Bischoffwerder had signed was not well received at the Berlin court. Although most ministers had rejected it, their opinion had no major impact on Frederick William II's position. The King of Prussia was so disappointed by the British, who at the decisive moment had refused to start war with Russia, that he was willing to accept Austrian terms and get rid of an inconvenient alliance with London. The eastern war was coming to an end and it seemed that Prussia would come out of it empty-handed without any territorial acquisitions. In that situation Frederick William II did not intend to oppose the idea of a deeper commitment of Prussia and Austria in the French case³⁰.

²⁹ See Leopold II to Marie Antoinette, Milan, July 2, 1791, *Marie Antoinette, Joseph II und Leopold II. Ihr Briefwechsel*, A. v. Arneth (ed.), Leipzig–Paris–Vienna 1866, p. 181. See also T.C. W. Blanning, *The Origins of the French Revolutionary Wars*, London–New York 1986, p. 84; A. Mathiez, *Rewolucja...*, pp. 156–157. The imperial letter was addressed to the rulers of Spain, Naples, Prussia, England and Russia. The emperor proposed to issue one declaration of all powers and threaten the French with using stricter measures if they did not want to return true freedom to Louis XVI and his family. See A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige...*, pp. 268–269; N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, p. 115; S. Askenazy, *Przymierze polsko-pruskie*, 3rd ed., Warszawa 1918, p. 165. For more information on the content of the Padua circular see note 73.

³⁰ See K.T. Heigel, *Deutsche Geschichte vom Tode Friedrichs des Grossen bis zur Auflösung des alten Reichs*, vol. II, Stuttgart 1911, p. 19; H. v. Sybel, *Geschichte der Revolutionszeit von 1789 bis 1800*, 2nd ed., vol. I, Frankfurt am Main 1882, p. 300; R.H. Lord, *The Second Partition of Poland*,

The King of Prussia soon realised that his decision to ratify the treaty signed in Vienna by Bischoffwerder was right. On July 26, 1791 the representatives of England, Charles Whitworth and William Fawkener, and Prussia, Leopold Heinrich, Count von der Goltz, signed in St. Petersburg a final protocol on the talks they held in the Russian capital with the ministers of Catherine II. According to the document, London, Berlin and the Hague recognised all claims of the St. Petersburg court and agreed on the Russian annexation of Turkish territories it had gained during the war. On August 4, 1791, thanks to the Prussian-English mediation, also Austria signed in Sistova the peace treaty with Turkey, thus, enlarging its territory by the Orşova district. It turned out that the entire eastern policy of the Triple Alliance had not brought any results at all. What is more, the capitulation to the imperial courts had brought the alliance to a definitive end. Prussia and Great Britain had nothing in common left, England withdrew from the European policy and the Berlin court started to cooperate with the emperor against the revolutionary France³¹.

Even if Leopold II was initially thinking to military intervene in a defence of his sister and brother-in-law, he abandoned the idea very soon. The French royal couple fairly quickly realised how unpopular they were. They realised that the war would only increase the general unrest and threaten their personal safety. For that reason, Louis XVI asked the emperor not to use his armed forces against the revolutionaries. In a letter to Hans Axel von Fersen that Marie Antoinette wrote on July 8, 1791 she explained her spouse's behaviour in such words: "The king believes that an open military intervention, even if started after a prior war declaration, will be enormously dangerous for not only the king and his family but also all those French who have not turned out to be revolutionists yet". In the same letter the queen had proposed the convening of an armed congress of European powers near the French borders. In her opinion, the congress, acting on behalf of all crowned heads, would have every right to demand the restoration of Louis XVI's royal prerogatives. The French king backed up Marie Antoinette's idea as he was

Cambridge [Mass.] 1915, pp. 214–215; S. Askenazy, *op. cit.*, pp. 166–169; T.C. W. Blanning, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

³¹ See Z. Anusik, *O polską koronę. Dwór sztokholmski wobec kwestii sukcesji tronu w Polsce w dobie sejmu Czteroletniego*, in: *Studia i materiały z dziejów nowożytnych*, K. Matwijowski, S. Ochmann-Staniszevska (eds), Prace historyczne XIII, Wrocław 1995, p. 162; S. Askenazy, *op. cit.*, pp. 168–172. It is worth noting that a collapse of the eastern policy of William Pitt's cabinet in April 1791 made England passive towards European developments taking place on the continent from May 1791 until November 1792. Thus, in September 1791 England rejected the Austro-Prussian proposal to co-defend the French royal family. See M. Duffy, *British Diplomacy and the French Wars 1789–1815*, in: *Britain and the French Revolution 1789–1815*, H.T. Dickinson (ed.), London 1989, p. 128.

convinced that a diplomatic pressure and a threat of using armed forces (the congress was to be convened in the presence of military troops) would be sufficient to force the National Constituent Assembly's leaders to make the desired concessions. The idea of convening an armed congress was accepted by Count Fersen almost immediately. Thus, from mid-July 1791 the chief adviser of Marie Antoinette was doing everything to make that idea come true as he considered it the best way to help the French royal couple. Yet, the plans of Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI clearly differed from Gustav III's intentions. The King of Sweden had sent Fersen to Vienna to gain the emperor's support in the war against the revolutionary France, not to try to carry out the project he disapproved of from the very beginning³².

According to the instruction that Gustav III had prepared in Aachen on July 21, 1791, Hans Axel von Fersen was to inform the emperor of the Swedish intention to intervene in France and thus obtain permission for beaching royal troops in Ostend. Gustav III's envoy was also ordered to get Leopold II's consent on the Swedish fleet free use of that port during an intervention in France. He was also to guarantee that adequate supplies of food for soldiers and forage for horses were stored up in Ostend. All issues related to the use of the Ostend port by the Swedes were to be regulated in a separate agreement which Fersen was authorised to make with Leopold II (he had even received *carte blanche* signed by Gustav III). What is more, Count Fersen was given a task to convince the emperor to acknowledge the King of Sweden as a leader of the anti-French league and allow him to head its troops. He was also to persuade Leopold II to diplomatically intervene in favour of the Swedish king in Koblenz, Munich and Kassel in order to accelerate negotiations with the French princes, the Elector of Bavaria and the Hessian Landgrave. Immediately after having signed the convention on the Ostend port, Fersen was also to demand from the Austrians to give at Gustav III's disposal Luxembourg's siege artillery that the king intended to take with him to France. Later in the document in question there was a statement that the Swedish diplomat might, if he wished, inform the emperor that Sweden intended to sign a subsidy treaty with the Madrid court. Fersen was also to inform the Vienna court about a significant advancement of talks on the signing of the Swedish-Russian treaty. The king permitted him to present a project

³² See A. Mathiez, *Rewolucja...*, p. 157; H.A. Barton, *op. cit.*, p. 128. It should be added that the idea of convening a military congress devoted to French affairs was suggested to the French royal couple by their trusted adviser in exile, Louis Auguste, Baron of Breteuil, who later turned out to be the most faithful ally of Hans Axel von Fersen in his efforts to save Louis XVI and his family. See N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, pp. 82, 112; Z. Anusik, *Kongres zbrojny u granic Francji. Niespełniona nadzieja kontrrewolucji spod znaku Tuileriów w latach 1791–1792*, "Przegląd Nauk Historycznych" 2003, vol. II, No. 2 (4), pp. 113–114.

of a broad coalition of Sweden, Austria, France and Russia that was to be similar to the one that was operating during the Seven Years War. According to Gustav III, such a coalition could greatly facilitate a restoration of the old order in France. Still, it seemed that the king was giving little significance to the last matter as he tactically placed those recommendations at the end of his instruction. The king's document also covered organisational matters. Gustav III ordered that the Swedish *chargé d'affaires* at Vienna, Knut Bildt, was Fersen's secretary during the latter's mission. The king also wrote that if during Fersen's negotiations the Swedish envoy to the imperial court, Johan Fredrik, Baron von Nolcken, returned to Vienna, the count should continue his talks and only inform the latter to such an extent as to keep the Vienna court "in a good shape". Gustav III ended his instruction with a statement that should he return to Sweden, Fersen was to write double reports, one for him and the other for Evert Taube in Aachen³³.

On July 24, 1791 Hans Axel von Fersen left Aachen and headed for the Austrian capital. He had in his hands an instruction which did not even mention the possibility of convening an armed congress of European powers near the French borders. Koblenz was the first stop on his journey. He arrived there the very next evening. The French princes, who were residing in the city, made the count wait for the return of Charles de Calonne who had been sent by them to London. The envoy of Louis XVI's brothers arrived to Koblenz on the evening of July 26. He met with Fersen almost immediately informing him about the results of his trip to England. The Swedish diplomat was deeply disappointed with the news as Calonne had only received George III's polite letter to Monsieur and the English court's assurance of kindness for the princes' cause. When he wrote to Gustav III about his stay at the court of the leaders of the French emigration, Fersen stated that both princes, especially the Count of Provence, were very intelligent but they were surrounded by wrong people. Thus, Koblenz was full of disgusting intrigues and a general interest had always been devoted there to the particular interests of different parties and coteries. Fersen, completely discouraged to the princes' court, left Koblenz on the morning of July 27 and arrived to Vienna on August 2, 1791. Immediately after his arrival he talked to his future secretary, Knut Bildt. He also met with Pehr Olof von Asp who stopped in the Austrian capital on his way to Istanbul³⁴.

³³ See Instruction pour le comte de Fersen fait à Aix la Chapelle ce 21 Juillet 1791, RA, Stafsundsarkivet, Hans Axel von Fersens Samling, vol. 11; N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, pp. 78–80; A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige...*, p. 263. See also *Fersen et la cour de France*, p. 148.

³⁴ See H.A. v. Fersen to Gustav III, Vienna, August 6, 1791, a private letter, RA, Germanica vol. 550; N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, pp. 104–105; Fersen's Diary: Vienna, August 2, 1791, *Rescue the Queen*, p. 39; *Fersens dagbok*, p. 101.

On August 4 Fersen met with Leopold II for the first time. He informed him about the Swedish-Russian talks on a joint military action against the revolutionary France. He also mentioned Gustav III's request for beaching the Swedish expeditionary corps in Ostend. He received an answer that before taking any decision in that matter, the emperor wanted to know what the position of Spain, England and Russia was. When Fersen mentioned the need to ensure a personal safety to the French royal family Leopold II said that: "It would be possible only thanks to the power play, that's right. Half measures lead to nowhere. Everything must be ready before we take any steps. The first declaration will be made, then the second, if necessary, and finally we will proceed with an action. Threats that are not real may, in fact, have terrible consequences". To Fersen's surprise the emperor was not at all interested in the King's of France failed escape from Paris. He gave the impression that he liked to speak but did not like to listen what his interlocutor had to say. According to the count, although the emperor had good intentions, he would do nothing for France without consulting other European courts. Therefore, Fersen insisted on his king's concluding negotiations with Catherine II as soon as possible. In his opinion, if the Stockholm court signed an alliance treaty with Russia, it could have a great impact on the final decision of Leopold II. Later that day, August 4, 1791, Hans Axel von Fersen talked to an old Chancellor Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz for whom he had Gustav III's letter. Yet, the Austrian minister made a bad impression on him. Even worse was the visit the Swedish diplomat paid to Vice-Chancellor Philip Cobenzl to whom on August 5 he handed his credentials. During their conversation about France Cobenzl mentioned that the restoration of the old order in that country would be difficult because the entire French nation had adopted new ideas. The remark put Fersen in a bad mood and he did not continue that conversation³⁵.

On August 7, 1791 Fersen was presented to the Empress Marie Louise. He also met with some diplomats accredited to the Vienna court. The representatives of the French king's brothers, Armand Jules, Duke of Polignac and Jean François, Baron of Escars did not suit his taste. Two days later, on August 9, Hans Axel von Fersen met in the house of the Prince von Kaunitz with Johann Rudolf Bischoffwerder. He immediately took a liking to the Prussian diplomat. The latter one complained on the Austrian tardiness and assured him that his ruler was ready to take up efforts to restore Louis XVI's reign. The same day Fersen tried to convince the Austrian chancellor that

³⁵ See Fersen's Diary: Vienna, August 4 and 5, 1791, *Rescue the Queen*, pp. 40–42; *Fersens dagbok*, pp. 101–105; A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige...*, pp. 264–265 (on p. 265 there is the misleading information that it was Chancellor Kaunitz that spoke to Fersen on August 5); N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, pp. 105, 108–109; Z. Anusik, *Kongres zbrojny...*, pp. 115–117; H.A. v. Fersen to Gustav III, Vienna, August 6, 1791, a private letter and the apostille enclosed to it, RA, Germanica vol. 550.

it was necessary to help the King of France as soon as possible because his situation was deteriorating every day. Kaunitz, however, repeated the arguments Fersen had heard few days earlier from the emperor and tried once again to convince him that for the time being one should act cautiously. Despite Fersen efforts, the chancellor did not want to start a conversation on the Ostend port, considering it a less important issue which would be solved by a future agreement of European powers. On August 10 the Swedish diplomat wrote to Gustav III about a recently signed Austro-Prussian treaty. His interlocutors agreed that the treaty had been concluded not only without the participation of the London court but even against its will. For Fersen, the latter fact could be of a great importance to France. Yet, he feared whether the Prussian-Austrian agreement was not the result of intrigues of Hertzberg's enemies who, thanks to an alliance with Austria, wanted to cause the minister's downfall. Gustav III's envoy also assured his lord that the emperor would like to get involved in French affairs but he was facing strong opposition from his ministry which he could not force to neither obey him nor listen to his opinion. In the same message, Fersen wrote something that must have caused the king's amazement. The count informed his ruler that next time he would try to make the emperor convene a congress on French matters in Brussels or other town near the French borders. The Swedish diplomat's intentions were undoubtedly noble but absolutely contradictory to the instruction that had been handed to him in Aachen. On the same day, August 10, 1791, Hans Axel von Fersen noted in his diary that George III's envoy had brought from England an answer to the emperor's circular letter. It was widely believed in Vienna it would be negative³⁶.

On August 14, 1791 Fersen met with the emperor for the second time. From Leopold II he learnt that the latter had received a long letter from Marie Antoinette that had been brought by Emmanuel Marie, Marquis of Noailles, Louis XVI's Ambassador to Vienna. The emperor assured the Swedish diplomat that he wanted to help his brother-in-law but he feared his sister's safety if the royal family was attacked by a hateful crowd. The ruler of Austria also said that before taking any steps he had to wait for a reply of the Spanish king. He did not doubt the latter's good will but he was afraid that the weakness of his state would prevent him from an active involvement in an anti-French league. The emperor had serious doubts as regards the attitude of Prussia, though. He said to Fersen that the Berlin court was striving for the expansion of its territory and thus demanded a guarantee that Louis XVI would pay for its military operation and appropriately reward the

³⁶ See Fersen's Diary: Vienna, August 7, 9 and 10, 1791, *Rescue the Queen*, pp. 43–44; *Fersens dagbok*, pp. 106–108; H.A. v. Fersen to Gustav III, Vienna, August 10, 1791, RA, Germanica vol. 550. See also *Fersen et la cour de France*, pp. 13, 156; A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige...*, pp. 265–267; N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, pp. 107–108; Z. Anusik, *Kongres zbrojny...*, pp. 117–118.

Berlin court for its support for the French Bourbons. Finally, Leopold II told Fersen that he intended to meet with the King of Prussia in Dresden and only then would he decide on the French case. After that conversation, Fersen concluded that the emperor was willing to help the French royal family and, therefore, he decided to accompany him on his way to Prague where he was to be coroneted as the King of Bohemia. Three days later, the count informed Gustav III of his intentions. He wrote to the king that he was going to Prague in order to find out results of the emperor's meeting with the King of Prussia and get a positive response on Ostend. In the same letter, Fersen informed Gustav III about an ultimate end of the Prussian-Austrian negotiations and Bischoffwerder's departure from Vienna. He also complained about Baron Johan Fredrik Nolcken who was completely indifferent towards Fersen's efforts at the Vienna court³⁷.

Fersen described his last actions in details in his message to Gustav III dated August 17, 1791. Once again, he mentioned his meeting with Leopold II and returned to the Vienna-Berlin relations. In his opinion, the emperor did not trust the King of Prussia as he did not believe in his willingness to take any actions. He also feared how much the King of Prussia would like to be paid for his alternative help. Yet, Fersen did not seem to entirely share Leopold II's objections. This was so since on the eve of his departure from Vienna Bischoffwerder said that Frederick William II would like the emperor to finally decide on taking any steps as regards France. The Prussian diplomat also assured the count that should Leopold II's answer be positive, his king would put the corps of the Prince von Hohenlohe, inspectorate offices in Magdeburg and troops in Westphalia on standby. According to Bischoffwerder, those troops could march out if only the Berlin court received money to cover costs of the war and a promise of future regular Austrian subsidies was made. Both, Fersen and the envoy of Frederick William II also believed that the already signed Prussian-Austrian treaty should finally convince the emperor of good intentions of the Berlin court. Yet, both diplomats were aware that a final decision on French matters would be made after a personal meeting of Leopold II and the King of Prussia. Still, Fersen was seriously concerned about the fact that there were different views on the French matters at the court of Vienna. In his opinion, the emperor was in an open conflict with his ministry which intended to avoid taking any steps against France until the National Assembly finally decided on the constitution. The imperial government would also like to wait for Louis XVI's official position on the issue. Only if the King of France was to reject a draft of the constitution, would the Austrians be persuaded to take more vigorous

³⁷ See Fersen's Diary: Vienna, August 14, 1791, *Rescue the Queen*, pp. 44–45; *Fersens dagbok*, pp. 108–110; H.A. v. Fersen to Gustav III, Vienna, August 17, 1791, a private letter, RA, Germanica vol. 550; Z. Anusik, *Kongres zbrojny...*, p. 118.

steps in his case. Thus, Fersen wrote to Gustav III that he was trying to convince the ministers of Leopold II how illusory were their expectations that led only to the unnecessary loss of time and that there was the need for an armed intervention as to force the assembly to make any concessions. All his efforts, however, proved fruitless. In that situation, he had to wait patiently for the results of Leopold II's meeting with Frederick William II that was going to take place in late August³⁸.

Unexpectedly, on August 19, 1791 Charles, Count of Artois accompanied by Charles de Calonne, Count Valentin Esterházy and François, Count of Escars arrived at the Austrian capital. The reason for the journey was that Jean Philippe, Chevalier de Coigny had brought to Koblenz Louis XVI's letter. The king was writing there that his youngest brother and all other emigrants should return to France. He also stated that the general will of the people and their commitment to the principles of the current constitution made the king adopt the latter. The message that came directly from the Tuileries aroused much consternation in the camp of the emigrants. In that situation, the Count of Artois decided to consult the emperor and agree with him on their further plans. Hans Axel von Fersen was reluctant to the count's visit from the very beginning. He was especially infuriated by the fact that Louis XVI's brother arrived to Vienna with Charles de Calonne who was regarded as an opponent of the French royal couple. Fersen gave more details about that visit in his letter to Gustav III dated August 20, 1791. He wrote that the above-mentioned letter of Louis XVI to the Count of Artois was handed to the Chevalier de Coigny in the presence of the queen and all ministers. He was read aloud, countersigned by Mr Duport-Dutertre and sealed. Coigny asked the king whether he had any other orders for him. Then, the king took from his pocket a sealed letter to Monsieur and handed it to the chevalier. The ministers seemed very surprised but did not dare to claim that it was shown to them. The king asked the Count of Provence to believe in everything he heard from the Chevalier de Coigny. He also asked him to always keep in mind a sense of honour and concern for the welfare of their country. As the Chevalier de Coigny did not have the possibility to talk with the royal couple in private, he did not receive any additional orders. Yet, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Armand Marc de Montmorin, gave him a long memorial which was to be delivered to the Count of Artois only if the latter one applied to the king's will. Montmorin tried to convince the count that he could safely return to France. He also wrote that he should not oppose to the constitution which was adopted as the people wanted. At the same time he warned him that if he refused to return, he would be called a traitor.

³⁸ See H.A. v. Fersen to Gustav III, Vienna, August 17, 1791, RA, Germanica vol. 550. See also A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige...*, pp. 267–268; Z. Anusik, *Kongres zbrojny...*, pp. 119–120.

Thus, he would only cause his crowned brother additional and unnecessary trouble. In the same letter, Fersen informed Gustav III that the King of Prussia expressed the wish to personally meet the Marquis of Bouillé. In that situation the Swedish diplomat wrote to the marquis to arrange his meeting with Frederick William II³⁹.

Fersen expressed his opinion on the Count of Artois' actions in his message to the king dated August 20, 1791. He wrote that the main aim of the visit of Louis XVI's brother to Vienna was to present to the emperor a situation of the French king. According to Fersen, the Count of Artois wanted to persuade Leopold II to take more vigorous steps, immediately make Monsieur the regent, order his troops to march out and publish the manifesto which would openly explain why he had sent to European courts the Padua circular letter of July 6. The Swedish diplomat also mentioned that although the count had no hope of participating in the emperor's meeting with the King of Prussia, he would like to be somewhere around so as to know its results as soon as possible. Overall Vienna expedition of the Count of Artois, however, according to Fersen, was to be useless and harmful. It was useless because it would not accelerate the emperor and his ministers' actions. It was harmful as it would only make Leopold II angry. The emperor could fear that the public opinion would have the impression that he made a decision on French matters under the influence of the Count of Artois. That, in turn, could affect his fame he was very jealous of. Gustav III's envoy suggested that the count's visit would not suit imperial ministers either as they used to regard the princes as frivolous and were interested in postponing a decision on the French intervention as long as possible. Still, Fersen was most annoyed by the fact that the Count of Artois arrived together with Mr de Calonne who had a terrible opinion at the Vienna court. According to the Swedish diplomat, both, the emperor and the Prince von Kaunitz as well as the Count von Cobenzl believed that Calonne was reckless, inconsiderate and unable to manage great political affairs. Later on Fersen wrote, in turn, that the princes asked the Chevalier de Coigny about the French king's intentions. The chevalier told them that he did not know it for sure but he was certain that the king wanted everything possible to be done to ensure safety to himself, his family and his supporters in France. The chevalier received an order from Montmorin not to show the memorial to the Count of Artois until he found him in good disposition. Thus, he revealed its content only to

³⁹ See Fersen's Diary: Vienna, August 19, 1791, *Rescue the Queen*, pp. 45–46; *Fersens dagbok*, pp. 112–116; H.A. v. Fersen to Gustav III, Vienna, August 20, 1791, a private letter, RA, Germanica vol. 550. It should be added that the Count of Artois brought to Vienna a project of the emperor's acknowledging of Monsieur's regency and a proposal to move Austrian, Prussian and Sardinian troops towards the French border. Those ideas were contrary to Hans Axel von Fersen's views. See N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, pp. 111–112; Z. Anusik, *Kongres zbrojny...*, pp. 120–121.

the princes' adviser, Joseph Hyacinthe, Count of Vaudreuil. Finally, Fersen was forced to end a description of the visit of Louis XVI's youngest brother to Vienna in a way that was contradictory to his earlier predictions. This was so since Leopold II invited the Count of Artois to his meeting with the King of Prussia and made certain promises for the future. The Swedish diplomat had no other choice but to emphasise that personally he strongly doubted whether the Austrian ministry would be equally favourably disposed towards the count⁴⁰.

Fersen could not have known that at exactly the same time representatives of the emperor were secretly negotiating with the Triumvirate's envoy, Father Joseph Dominique Louis, who had been sent by the National Constituent Assembly's leaders to Brussels to bring the need to maintain peace to the Austrians' attention. Thus, Leopold II concluded that revolutionaries got scared of his threats and they were actually less dangerous than he had expected. As the Triumvirate had promised him that it would save the monarchy, the emperor eagerly abandoned thoughts about war, especially as he had received only cautious responses to his Padua circular letter and thus realised it would be very difficult to build a broad European coalition against France. In order to cover up his retreat, on August 25, 1791 Leopold II decided to sign in Pillnitz a joint declaration with Frederick William II. Both rulers proclaimed in the document that the situation in France was the common interest of all European powers. They also stated that they would keep their armies ready to intervene in favour of Louis XVI in case other rulers decided to give him their support. The declaration of Pillnitz was less explicit than the imperial circular of July 6. The threats against revolutionaries were only conditional there. In Paris, both, the king and leaders of the National Constituent Assembly understood its real purpose. Only French emigrants still pretended that the declaration was a promise to support their plans and ideas. On August 31, 1791 Hans Axel von Fersen, who was watching that day a ceremonial arrival of the emperor to Prague, wrote in his diary that the declaration of Pillnitz was good but it would not help the French king. Yet, he was deeply concerned with the princes' idea to publish their own manifesto on Louis XVI's case. According to Fersen, the princes' manifesto could prove to be dangerous for the French monarch. The Swedish diplomat was convinced that first intervention troops should be gathered and only then could one publish manifestos. On September 1 Fersen received a copy of the Madrid court's response to Gustav III's letter. Charles IV was ready to give money for 16 thousand Swedish soldiers and wanted to sign a subsidy treaty with the Stockholm court. However, he asked Gustav III to agree with

⁴⁰ See H.A. v. Fersen to Gustav III, Vienna, August 20, 1791, RA, Germanica vol. 550. See also Fersen's Diary: Vienna, August 20, 1791, *Rescue the Queen*, p. 46; *Fersens dagbok*, pp. 116–117; Z. Anusik, *Kongres zbrojny...*, pp. 121–122.

the emperor on any steps that could regard France. After having read the letter, Fersen once again became optimistic about the future. It was clear that Spain was determined to participate in saving Louis XVI's throne⁴¹.

Later that day, September 1, 1791, Hans Axel von Fersen sent to Gustav III a message he had received from the Marquis of Bouillé. However, in the letter enclosed to it he wrote that he did not approve of the marquis's plan of military operations. Fersen believed that force should not be used as long as the king and his family were in the hands of the rebels. In his opinion, it was necessary to issue a joint declaration on Louis XVI's case, concentrate troops near all French borders, recall from Paris all diplomats, refuse to recognise the new French flag and convince the French that European powers were ready to intervene in the defence of the king. European courts should also request that Louis XVI was free to go to a chosen place near the border, otherwise they would use all possible means to release the king from his prison. If the last threat was to be realised, intervention troops should enter France from all directions. At the same time, Swedish and Russian ships should block the French coast to rob rebels of hope that they would get any help from there. Fersen believed that the cooperation with Russia was essential for the entire action's success. Therefore, he advised to add to the future convention with the emperor on Ostend a paragraph concerning Russian units and ships. He was also convinced that a letter to Louis XVI should be written as to explain him all steps taken up in his case and dissuade him from doing anything that could make the realisation of the plan impossible. Yet, the actions of the Vienna court made Fersen believe that he would not be able to carry out tasks the king had entrusted to him. Thus, he wrote that if he did not get the emperor's positive response in the near future, Nolcken would conduct further negotiations and he himself would return to Brussels to observe events that could determine the future fate of the French royal family. As the Swedish diplomat suspected that the Austrian ministry wanted to postpone all actions until the next spring, he claimed that he would make those plans much more difficult or even impossible. Still, the Austrians supported the idea of convening an armed congress in Aachen from the very beginning and thus Fersen informed he would try to convince them of the need to gather imperial forces near the French borders. In his opinion, that step should be decisive for the success of the entire action and should make a great impression on both, French rebels and other European rulers⁴².

⁴¹ See A. Mathiez, *Rewolucja...*, p. 161; L. Villat, *op. cit.*, p. 118; T.C. W. Blanning, *op. cit.*, pp. 86–87; B. Dembiński, *Rosya a Rewolucya Francuska*, Kraków 1896, pp. 116–119; S. Askenazy, *op. cit.*, p. 172; Fersen's Diary: Prague, August 31 and September 1, 1791, *Rescue the Queen*, pp. 47–48; *Fersens dagbok*, pp. 118–120; Z. Anusik, *Kongres zbrojny...*, pp. 122–124.

⁴² See H.A. v. Fersen to Gustav III, Prague, September 1, 1791, a private letter, RA, Germanica vol. 550; Z. Anusik, *Kongres zbrojny...*, pp. 124–125.

On September 2, 1791 Hans Axel von Fersen met with the emperor again. Leopold II asked the Swedish diplomat what the French emigrants really wanted. Fersen replied that they wanted power, position and the king depending on them. Thus, they were always intriguing against each other. The Ostend case was mentioned during the meeting. Although the emperor did not openly speak out his mind on that subject, Fersen concluded that he would like to act but still was facing strong opposition from his ministry. The count was afraid that a rescue mission for the French king would be postponed until spring. On September 4 the envoy of Gustav III met, in turn, with Vice-Chancellor Cobenzl. He learnt from him that the declaration of Pillnitz was sent to all European courts. At the same time, the emperor proposed to recall all ambassadors from Paris and convene an armed congress in Aachen. Yet, Fersen was not fully satisfied with that meeting as he had an impression that the Austrians had not informed the Stockholm court about their plans⁴³. Fersen described his both meetings in details in his letter to Gustav III dated September 6, 1791. He wrote that the emperor had received the King's of Spain response to the Padua circular of July 6. Although the Swedish diplomat found it positive, he still had some reservations. This was so since the Madrid court advised cautiousness and wanted to wait for Louis XVI's reaction to a draft of the constitution that had been submitted to him. What is more, Charles IV introduced some changes and amendments to the proposed joint declaration of which the emperor did not approve. Thus, Fersen came to the conclusion that the answer from Madrid would not change the attitude of the Vienna court. In his opinion, the Austrian plan predicted to convene the congress and postpone any further action until the next spring. As Gustav III's envoy was convinced that such a way of thinking was dangerous, he was doing everything possible to dissuade the emperor from the idea. He tried to make him realise the dangers which the King of France and his family would be exposed to because of that delay. He claimed that if Louis XVI did not get any help soon, he would be forced to come to terms with the assembly. Finally, he tried to convince his interlocutors that the government in France, perhaps good but established by rebels, would be a dangerous example for other European countries. All those arguments did not convince the Viennese, though. They were invariably repeating that they could not take any steps in Louis XVI's case without the participation of other courts and, therefore, they had to patiently wait for their response⁴⁴.

⁴³ See Fersen's Diary: Prague, September 3 and 5, 1791, *Rescue the Queen*, pp. 48–49; *Fersens dagbok*, pp. 120–122. See also N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, pp. 112–115.

⁴⁴ See H.A. v. Fersen to Gustav III, Prague, September 6, 1791, a private letter, RA, Germanica vol. 550; Z. Anusik, *Kongres zbrojny...*, pp. 125–126.

Fersen learnt from Philip Cobenzl that there had already appeared first discrepancies between the emperor and the King of Prussia as well. Frederick William II did not support the idea of convening a separate congress on France. He suggested instead that the problem should be resolved by diplomats accredited to the Vienna court. They were to prepare, thanks to special credentials of their courts, a joint declaration of European powers and decide on appropriate political and military steps to be taken up. Yet, both, Leopold II and Cobenzl strongly opposed the idea. The vice-chancellor argued that the ambassadors to Vienna were too far from the French affairs and did not have, in fact, any instructions from their courts. According to the Austrian politician, if the King's of Prussia proposal was to be presented to other powers, it would only further delay a final decision on France. He emphasised that instead of sending messengers to various European capitals, it would be much quicker to convene the congress in Aachen which was both, near French borders and the princes' headquarters in Koblenz. Thus, all the ambassadors should be recalled from Paris and sent to Aachen with the necessary instructions on how to definitively settle out French problems. Cobenzl also informed Fersen that he had already sent to all European courts a proposal of convening the congress in Aachen and a text of the declaration that Leopold II and Frederick William II had signed in Pillnitz. At the same time, the vice-chancellor disheartened his interlocutor by saying that it would take time to organise everything and it would be difficult to start any action until the late autumn or even the next spring. It was also clear that the emperor would not take any steps as regards France as long as he would be sure of other powers' cooperation. When Fersen asked if a proposal to take an active part in solving French matters had been also sent to Gustav III, the vice-chancellor answered that he was not sure whether an appropriate instruction had been already sent to Stockholm. After the Swedish diplomat's demands, Cobenzl finally promised to send appropriate orders to the Austrian envoy to Sweden, Karl, Count von Ludolf. Fersen also tried to convince the vice-chancellor that the emperor was losing precious time while waiting for the response of other rulers. He argued that if the emperor and the King of Prussia took appropriate steps, all other courts would follow their example. Gustav III's envoy was not able to make Cobenzl change his mind, though⁴⁵.

Fersen described in detail his conversation with Leopold II on Ostend as well. Asked about his final decision on that issue, the emperor replied that he had been told that Gustav III was going to beach his troops in La Hougue port in Normandy. Once again the Swedish diplomat tried to convince his

⁴⁵ See H.A. v. Fersen to Gustav III, Prague, September 6, 1791, a private letter, RA, Germanica vol. 550; Z. Anusik, *Kongres zbrojny...*, pp. 126–127.

interlocutor that the Swedish fleet must call at a friendly port where it could rest after a long voyage and prepare for the further action. Although the emperor saw no problem in it, he expected similar request from Catherine II in the near future and thus wanted to wait to find out whether Russian troops intended to act alone or together with the Swedish ones. He also emphasised that he would make a final decision after he had received a response from all courts to which he had addressed the Padua circular. Thus, Fersen concluded that the Vienna court would delay any decision on France and would make it only when absolutely necessary. The emperor would not do anything that might close him a way to a future agreement with the current government in France. The count even began to suspect (and that suspicion filled him with great anxiety) that the Austrians would not insist on the release of the royal family before negotiations with the National Assembly. For that reason he was eagerly looking to General Friedrich Ludwig Hohenlohe's arrival to Prague as he expected to find in the new envoy of the King of Prussia an ally in his actions. If, however, it did not bring any results, Fersen was ready to support the imperial plan of immediate dismissal of the ambassadors from Paris and convening a congress in Aachen, provided that the diplomats would be given instructions which would accelerate future negotiations. The count was going to make the congress being accompanied by a demonstration of force which should clearly show rebels that European powers were ready to rescue the King of France. He warned Gustav III that he would try to make superpowers demand the release of Louis XVI under the conditions of the declaration of Pillnitz, without deciding on the exact form of the government in France. According to Fersen, European powers should not believe the National Constituent Assembly that the king was free because he was allowed to go to Fontainebleau or Compiègne. He would consider that the king was really free when the latter would go to the Hermitage Castle, would have the Royal Guard at his disposal and would summon line units to defend himself. Fersen tried to convince both, Gustav III and his Austrian interlocutors that should not those conditions be met, European powers had to use all possible means to release the king⁴⁶.

In the final part of the letter in question, Hans Axel von Fersen wrote that he would insist on the emperor's signing a convention on Ostend. Yet, he warned the king that it would be applied only after all conditions had been agreed upon by Gustav III and Leopold II. The Swedish diplomat also tried to convince his lord that the convening of the congress in Aachen would be very useful for their common cause. The congress could persuade the emperor to accelerate his actions. It could also convince the French that superpowers

⁴⁶ See H.A. v. Fersen to Gustav III, Prague, September 6, 1791, a private letter, RA, Germanica vol. 550; Z. Anusik, *Kongres zbrojny...*, pp. 127–128.

were ready to support their king. Finally, thanks to the congress generous and noble intentions of Gustav III would become known to the general public. Regarding other matters mentioned in the royal instruction Fersen wrote that imperial ministers had assured him that there would be no need for separate negotiations with the Elector of Bavaria and the Landgrave von Hesse because the Parliament of Reich had decided to send to war all princes' units. Thus, it would be enough to give the troops necessary orders to start military operations. In a postscript to the letter of September 6 Fersen wrote about the Prince von Hohenlohe's arrival to Prague. According to the Swedish diplomat, he was sent in order to make the emperor take steps against France. The King of Prussia had also recommended the general to discuss a plan of future military operations with the Marquis of Bouillé and the Austrian general to whom the emperor would give the command of his troops. Hohenlohe told Fersen that 25 thousand Prussian soldiers were ready to set forth. Yet, the King of Prussia did not intend to start any military action without the emperor's participation. Thus, Fersen concluded that both courts still did not fully trust each other. He hoped, however, that the arrival of the Prince von Hohenlohe would soon improve relations between the emperor and the King of Prussia⁴⁷.

On the same day, September 6, 1791, Leopold II was coroneted the King of Bohemia in the Cathedral of St. Wenceslas. Fersen felt strongly offended as he had not been invited to an official dinner given on that special occasion. After another conversation with the Prince von Hohenlohe he came to the conclusion that the Prussians wanted to act too quickly as they were not fully aware of the current situation in France. What was even worse, the general said that the Berlin court would demand Hainaut and Alsace in return for its help. Although Leopold II rejected the idea without hesitation, Fersen sadly reflected that Louis XVI's case worked as a bargaining chip in the Austrian-Prussian relations. During his subsequent conversation with Frederick William II's envoy, Fersen heard that the Swedish king, having already received a positive response from Spain, should put his troops on ships and sail to Ostend without the emperor's consent. The Swedish diplomat's reaction is unknown but as he did not write a word to Gustav III about it, one could assume that he feared that the latter would follow the Prussian general's advice. On September 8 Hans Axel von Fersen noted in his diary that the rumour had it in Prague that the emperor had received favourable news from Russia. The count could not confirm that information because "that fool Golitsyn" [Fyodor N. – author's note] could say nothing about his court's response⁴⁸.

⁴⁷ See H.A. v. Fersen to Gustav III, Prague, September 6, 1791, a private letter, and apostille, RA, Germanica vol. 550; Z. Anusik, *Kongres zbrojny...*, pp. 128–129.

⁴⁸ See Fersen's Diary: Prague, September 6, 7 and 8, 1791, *Rescue the Queen*, pp. 49–51; *Fersens dagbok*, pp. 122–123. See also N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, pp. 110, 113; Z. Anusik, *Kongres zbrojny...*, pp. 129–130.

Finally, on September 9, 1791 Hans Axel von Fersen handed the emperor an extensive memorial entirely dedicated to the French affairs. He wrote in it that all European rulers were convinced of the need to reduce unrest in France and avenge the affronted majesty of King Louis XVI. In his opinion, the emperor had to play a dual role in that affair, a brother and a leader of the league. Since all powers were convinced of the need to take some action and were only waiting for the emperor's signal, he should get things moving as he would be supported by other rulers. It was obvious to Fersen that the first and foremost aim of all actions had to be the personal safety of the king and his family. To achieve that aim the people and the party of the most vicious rebels should be scared by the scale of intended operations and thus abandon an unfounded hope that European powers would not be able or willing to take appropriate steps in the king's case. Thus, more moderate rebels should come to their senses and act as great powers wished. The recall of the ambassadors and ministers from Paris as well as the convening of a congress in Aachen would certainly make a great impression, yet, if an armed force was not used, the aim would not be achieved as the French would not believe that European powers were really going to help the king. Thus, Fersen advised Leopold II to move towards the French border two cavalry regiments (one to Belgium, one to Freiburg) and three infantry battalions (to Freiburg) as well as order to set up warehouses and start other necessary preparations for the campaign. He also claimed that the emperor's war preparations should be publicised and the number of units taking part in planned operations exaggerated. It should scare off and deceive the French who had always been stupid and gullible. If the people saw foreign armies on the borders of the kingdom, they would believe that they had already reached the city gates of Paris. Fear and internal unrest in several border provinces should do the rest and thus ensure the success of the allied powers' actions⁴⁹.

As for the current international situation, Fersen wrote that the King of Prussia had declared a desire to follow the emperor's example. The King of Spain, as well as the rulers of Sardinia and Naples, were of the same opinion. One could also count on the support of the Swiss. Sweden had long been ready and was only waiting for the emperor's decision on Ostend. Also Russia was positive about the whole case and it was expected that it would send its troops for the emperor's first request. Fersen was sure that the arrival of Swedish and Russian troops would greatly impress the French residents because of both, a war fame they enjoyed and an aura of barbarism that surrounded the inhabitants of the North. In his opinion, those troops were to be extremely useful for Belgium as well. What is more, they could be used to

⁴⁹ See *Mémoire présentée à L'Empereur sur les affaires de France* (copie) that H.A. v. Fersen handed to Leopold II in Prague on September 9, 1791, RA, Germanica vol. 550.

keep Normandy in check, control the coast, cut Paris off from its supplies and watch over the mouth of the Seine. Only England's position was unknown. Although after the Pillnitz congress it was completely isolated in the international arena, Fersen advised to find out whether the London court did not intend to support French rebels. He also reminded the emperor that Louis XVI had agreed on the cession of Isle de France and Bourbon islands, extension of the commercial treaty of 1786 and amendments in some of its paragraphs as to be guaranteed that the London court would stay neutral in the future conflict with rebels. The ruler of France had also agreed that his future concessions to London were guaranteed by all powers participating in the Aachen congress⁵⁰.

In the following part of his memorial, Fersen wrote that the concentration of Austrian and Prussian troops on French borders should make it more difficult to defend, increase the fear and insecurity of French inhabitants as well as deepen the existing internal problems. Although Fersen welcomed the idea of convening a congress of diplomats who, thanks to their long stay in Paris, had formed their own opinion on the current situation in France, he tried to convince the emperor that they should receive special instructions from their courts as not to lose more time on sending another messengers. He also warned the emperor against direct negotiations with the National Assembly as not to make the slightest appearance that it might represent legal power in France. Fersen emphasised once again that the release of Louis XVI should be a prerequisite for further negotiations without which no talks should be started. The count also insisted on defining a true freedom of the king. Thus, he proposed to issue a separate declaration that the ruler of France could not be considered free as long as he was not present in a place chosen in advance by the congress's participants. The Swedish diplomat once again reminded the emperor that it was indisputable that even good government that had been established by the rebels would always be a bad and dangerous example for other countries. He also advised that any details concerning the form of the French government should not be discussed during the future talks with the French. It would keep everyone in the dark as to what form of the government would be established in France after the king's release, thus giving hope to all parties, the democrats included. If the assembly refused to restore freedom to the king, which could not be ruled out, Fersen proposed to use force. Yet, in his opinion, before any military invasion on France, proper manifestos should be issued as to guarantee peace and safety to all those who would not oppose intervention troops⁵¹.

⁵⁰ See *ibidem*.

⁵¹ See *ibidem*.

While describing the current situation in France Fersen stated, in turn, that there was great and universal discontent prevailing in the country. In his opinion, the least crazy of the French, who would like to support the “good cause”, did not have enough strength and were just expecting encouragement from the outside to start any action. “The people have already noticed the shortcomings of the new order but furious and intransigent democrats still have plenty of ways to prevent any violence. The madness of the clergy, the aristocrats and the majority of those imbeciles who were stupefied by the chimera of freedom, that had been instilled on them from the childhood, led to the outbreak of the revolution. Yet, the new state of affairs arouses strong objections and there are many who would like to get out of the trap which they found themselves in. The unsatisfied, who are in big numbers, only wait for foreign intervention and there is no doubt that such an impressive show of force as the union of all powers and concentration of their vanguards near French borders will encourage them and make them openly act against the revolution”. Fersen seemed to be convinced that a force demonstration would increase the number of the unsatisfied who would be joined by the undecided and those whose main principle was to always support the strongest party. He believed that the number of the latter was very large in France. Finally, the count stated that in the face of a foreign intervention the democrats would try to save their skins and erase earlier mistakes by searching an agreement with the king. Thus, the counterrevolution would succeed without the use of too violent means. The convening of an armed congress would be sufficient. That wise and decisive step would give courage to the despaired, would terrify the resistant and finally would make the king confident and provide him with means necessary for his further resistance⁵².

Hans Axel von Fersen enclosed to the memorial for Leopold II a *resumé* with a list of above-mentioned steps which had to be immediately taken as regards the French case. It contained the following proposals: 1. Recall the ambassadors and ministers from Paris and send them to the Aachen congress with instructions necessary to speed up future negotiations 2. Do not discuss any details of the future French government as to avoid dissatisfaction of potential candidates for ministers 3. Always demand full freedom for the king under the conditions of the Pillnitz declaration. Strive for the monarchical government in France that would be best to protect both, the ruler's rights and a welfare of the French nation. If the king declared himself free in Paris or if he was to be given only apparent freedom or if he was only allowed to go to Fontainebleau and Compiègne, declare that he would not be recognised as free as long as he was not allowed to go to Hermitage or Montmédy castles where he should call his guards and those line units he

⁵² See *ibidem*; and Z. Anusik, *Kongres zbrojny...*, pp. 130–133.

would choose on his own. Clearly state that if those conditions were not met, it would be a new evidence of the king's imprisonment and thus European powers would be made to use force 4. Immediately issue and appropriately publicise orders on the marching off the troops, food gathering, recruitment etc. Immediately send some regiments to support the congress, strengthen it and convince the public of the intention of its convening 5. Encourage the King of Prussia and other rulers to follow those steps and participate in any actions started by the emperor 6. Open the Ostend port for Swedish ships and troops. Demand Russian reinforcements when it was possible to sail on the North Sea 7. Influence the decision of the Parliament in Regensburg and make it participate in the proposed project 8. Appoint a general who would command the assigned vanguards. Make him agree with General Hohenlohe and Mr de Bouillé on the troops' positioning and the winter headquarters' preparations 9. Make other powers aware of that regulation and ask them to immediately support the ongoing activities. The emperor and the King's of Prussia example should encourage them to make an appropriate decision 10. Authorise the congress to negotiate with England its neutrality and offer it necessary guarantees on the part of all powers involved in the case. Start all actions as soon as possible to take advantage of the current situation in France and thus ensure an inevitable success of the entire operation⁵³.

While being in Prague, Hans Axel von Fersen was closely observing Leopold II's actions. On September 10 he noted in his diary that the emperor had received a letter from the Queen of France. Marie Antoinette asked her brother whether European powers were able to take any steps in Louis XVI's case. At the same time, she recommended caution and tried to dissuade the emperor from the cooperation with the princes whom, as usual, she did not trust. According to Fersen, Leopold II told too many people about the queen's letter which could prove to be very dangerous for her⁵⁴. On September 13, 1791 Gustav III's envoy once again met with the emperor who informed him about Catherine II's answer to the circular letter of July 6. In his letter to the King of Sweden that Fersen wrote the next day he claimed that the ruler of Russia had proposed to convene the congress of powers in Spa or Aachen, recall the ambassadors from Paris, issue a joint declaration to the National Assembly and break all political and trade contacts with France. The empress also promised to send another courier soon who was to bring more detailed information about political and military steps intended by her. Yet, that statement of Catherine II gave Leopold II a pretext to further

⁵³ See *Resumé des moyens a employer et qui devraient être au plutôt mis en usage* enclosed to the memorial that H.A. v. Fersen handed to the emperor in Prague on September 9, 1791, RA, Germanica vol. 550. See also Z. Anusik, *Kongres zbrojny...*, pp. 133–134.

⁵⁴ See Fersen's Diary: Prague, September 10, 1791, *Rescue the Queen*, p. 51; *Fersens dagbok*, p. 124.

postpone the final decision on France. Nevertheless, Fersen seemed to be satisfied with the emperor's actions. In his opinion, the ruler of Austria had already decided to convene a congress and he only needed to be persuaded to give it military support. The emperor even assured the Swedish diplomat that he had already made necessary arrangements in that regard. Leopold II also told him that the Austrian special envoy to London, François, Count of Mercy-Argenteau, had informed him that England intended to maintain a strict neutrality on France and would not interfere in the planned intervention in that country. Hans Axel von Fersen was worried, however, that the actions of the Vienna court were too slow and believed that the latter would do everything to prevent Swedish and Russian troops from quick intervention in France. In his opinion, the emperor wanted to postpone any action at least until the spring. Still, the count hoped that his memorandum of September 9 would change that way of thinking and would bring the results so eagerly expected by the Stockholm court. In the final part of his message Fersen wrote that the Landgrave von Hesse had decided to consult all actions concerning France with the Vienna court. For the Swedish diplomat it was a great defeat suffered by "a good cause". He believed that the landgrave's example would be followed by other German princes who would take no action without the emperor's consent which, in turn, could blight all Gustav III's plans⁵⁵.

Over the next few days Fersen's mood deteriorated. This was so since on September 16 he met with Vice-Chancellor Cobenzl to discuss the Russian position towards the French affairs. The vice-chancellor said that although Catherine II encouraged the emperor to act and promised him subsidies, she did not intend to send her soldiers to France. Cobenzl also told the Swedish diplomat that, as far as he was concerned, any military action should be postponed until the spring. After that conversation, Fersen came to the conclusion that the Austrians were simply afraid of the King of Sweden. Thus, they did not want to act either with him or on their own. Completely devastated Hans Axel von Fersen complained about the unnecessary waste of time. He concluded that the Vienna court would passively wait until the spring before taking any steps in Louis XVI's case⁵⁶. He described it in a letter to Gustav III dated September 20, 1791. He also informed his king that extremely diplomatic Vienna ministry wanted to create the league of European powers first and only then it would consider the possibility of any real action. According to Fersen, everything would depend on the French king's response to the constitution. The count believed that if Louis XVI decided to accept it,

⁵⁵ See H.A. v. Fersen to Gustav III, Prague, September 14, 1791, RA, Germanica vol. 550. See also N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, p. 115; Z. Anusik, *Kongres zbrojny...*, pp. 134–136.

⁵⁶ See Fersen's Diary: Prague, September 16, 1791, *Rescue the Queen*, p. 52; *Fersens dagbok*, pp. 127–128.

the Austrians would once again ask European courts about their attitude to the king's freedom which, of course, would further delay the emperor's final decision. Yet, Fersen was convinced that everything could change if the Swedish and Russian army arrived to Belgium later that year. The count wrote that he would submit an official note to the Austrian ministry soon but he predicted that he would receive the emperor's pondering reply. Disappointed by the Austrians' "improper" behaviour Fersen informed Gustav III that his longer stay in Prague would be useless and therefore he decided to go to Brussels without a further delay⁵⁷.

Fersen had already written the above-mentioned letter when Gustav III's courier came to Prague with new messages to the emperor. Thus, on September 21, 1791 Hans Axel von Fersen met with Leopold II and handed him the Swedish king's letters (Gustav III's personal letter to the emperor and a copy of the letter from the King of England to the ruler of Sweden). The emperor told the Swedish diplomat that one could count on the neutrality of England as regards French affairs. Yet, when firmly asked about Ostend, he replied that Belgian estates had opposed the idea of receiving any warships at that port. Fersen also insisted on Leopold II's speaking his mind on the project of Belgium being a starting point for future actions against France. He heard that one should wait for a joint decision of all European powers, especially that of Catherine II. According to the emperor, earlier mobilisation of troops and any kind of armed demonstration would be both, unwise and harmful. Eventually, Leopold II promised to inform the Swedish king about his plans on France. After the meeting Hans Axel von Fersen concluded that there were serious discrepancies between the emperor and his ministers. He wrote to Gustav III that "the emperor is positive about the idea but has to face an opposition of his ministry and old Kaunitz who wants to strictly comply with all rules of diplomacy". Fersen also came to the conclusion that the Vienna court would finally make a decision to start action against France but not earlier than in the spring. In his opinion, the emperor had already decided to convene an armed congress but there were still some differences among his ministers. A letter to Gustav III also included information that Leopold II had very well received Fersen's memorandum and "seems to have confidence in its content". Finally, Fersen, emphasising enormous difficulties he had encountered during his negotiations with the Vienna court, noted that General Friedrich Ludwig Hohenlohe, embroiled with the emperor and

⁵⁷ See H.A. v. Fersen to Gustav III, Prague, September 20, 1791, RA, Germanica vol. 550; Fersen's Diary: Prague, September 20, 1791, *Rescue the Queen*, p. 53; *Fersens dagbok*, p. 128; Z. Anusik, *Kongres zbrojny...*, pp. 136–137.

his ministers, had left Prague as he had not seen a possibility to fulfil the mission assigned to him by the King of Prussia⁵⁸.

Hans Axel von Fersen described a current state of affairs in France in a message written to Gustav III on September 21. He was convinced that the arrival of the Count of Artois to Vienna had caused a lot of harm to "a good cause". Both, the Prussian king and Bischoffwerder had been discouraged by Calonne's behaviour in Pillnitz. Thus, Fersen asked his king not to engage the French princes in neither negotiations with the emperor nor any other negotiations concerning the European league. In his opinion, the princes would always play a secondary role in the international arena. He also informed Gustav III that Evert Taube had sent him a plan on the Normandy landings. The count expressed an opinion that if the landing in Normandy was not to be correlated with other actions on the French borders, the whole plan should be considered as risky and dangerous for the interests of both, the Swedish king and Louis XVI. As Fersen was certain that the Austrians would not start any action until the next spring, he tried to convince Gustav III of the necessity of his immediate departure to Brussels. He claimed that it would be easier for him to follow French developments from there. He also hoped that direct contacts with François, Count of Mercy-Argenteau, the emperor's chief adviser on France, and the Governor of Belgium, Archduchess Maria Christina, would prove more fruitful than futile negotiations with the emperor and his ministers. Fersen intended to inform the King and the Queen of France about the results of his mission to the imperial court as they were aware of what had been already done in their case. As the count feared that Gustav III would entrust him with a mission to the Koblenz court, he emphasised that he was a *persona non grata* there and, therefore, he intended to pay Louis XVI's brothers only a short, conventional visit. On the same day, Fersen noted in his diary that the French matters seemed to bore Leopold II. He also wrote, clearly disappointed by his failed mission to the Vienna court what follows: "I've never seen cases being handled in such a way and I'm not pleased that there was so little progress made"⁵⁹.

On September 22, 1791 Hans Axel von Fersen handed an official note to Vice-Chancellor Philip von Cobenzl that regarded giving the Swedish fleet an access to the Ostend port and agreeing upon a plan of joint operations

⁵⁸ See H.A. v. Fersen to Gustav III, Prague, September 21, 1791, a private letter, RA, Germanica vol. 550. See also A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige...*, pp. 270–271; *Fersen et la cour de France*, p. 186; N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, p. 110; Z. Anusik, *Kongres zbrojny...*, p. 137.

⁵⁹ See H.A. v. Fersen to Gustav III, Prague, September 21, 1791, a private letter, RA, Germanica vol. 550; Fersen's Diary: Prague, September 21, 1791, *Rescue the Queen*, p. 53; *Fersens dagbok*, p. 129. Z. Anusik, *Kongres zbrojny...*, p. 138. As regards the above-mentioned correspondence between H.A. v. Fersen and E. Taube see A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige...*, pp. 269–270; *Fersen et la cour de France*, pp. 178, 187.

“to restore power to the King of France as well as bring order and peace to his kingdom”. Fersen enclosed to the note a project of a future Swedish-Austrian convention: “Taking into account an union and friendship of His Majesty the Emperor and His Majesty the King of Sweden as well as following a desire to cooperate and agree upon steps to be taken to facilitate the King’s of France escape and restore his authority, His Majesty the Emperor agrees to: 1. Gather in the Ostend port those troops and ships that HM the King of Sweden, in consultation with HM the Emperor, will send to France 2. Bring to the port in question equipment and supplies necessary for the provisioning of the army of HM the King of Sweden 3. Provide, for a predetermined price, forage, food, horses (if needed) and accommodation for Swedish troops during their stay and march through countries of HM the Emperor 4. Allow a return of Swedish troops through the emperor’s countries and their further embarkation at the port of Ostend 5. Send to the Governor-General of the (Austrian) Netherlands orders concerning the declaration in question 6. Allow HM the King of Sweden to send quartermaster services to Ostend in order to check out its surroundings and make necessary preparations for beaching the troops 7. The convention being applied only after the mutual agreement of both courts as regards time and manner of operation as well as all further steps 8. Give to Russian troops and warships, if they are to cooperate with the Swedish ones, the same privileges as to the Swedish troops and ships”⁶⁰.

Later that day, Fersen sent another letter to Gustav III. He wrote in it that when he was handing the note to Cobenzl he added that should not the Austrians give free access to Ostend, Swedish ships would use English ports. As the vice-chancellor asked him about a date when Swedish ships could set sail, he responded that in 1788 Gustav III’s fleet had sailed across the Baltic Sea in December without any problems. He added, however, that to sail safely through the English Channel ships had to sail out of Swedish ports by mid-October. Thus, he requested the minister to give his response as soon as possible. During their conversation he also mentioned that Gustav III felt offended that he had not received the circular letter of the emperor to European courts. He heard that letters had been sent only to those courts which position the emperor had not been sure of. The vice-chancellor even added that Count Ludolf was ordered to inform Gustav III about both, the course and an outcome of the Pillnitz convention. In the same letter, Fersen informed his king that the ruler of Spain, Charles IV, who was sharing the

⁶⁰ See Note remise au Cte de Cobenzl le 22 Sept. 1791 (copie), RA, Germanica vol. 550; *Projet de la Convention entre Sa Majesté L’Empereur et Sa Majesté le Roi de Suède* (copie), *ibidem*. It is worth noting that N. Åkeson made a serious mistake when stating that Fersen’s note dated September 22, 1791 was handed to Chancellor Kaunitz. See *idem*, *op. cit.*, pp. 117–118. See also Z. Anusik, *Kongres zbrojny...*, pp. 138–139.

emperor's current position, had written to French princes to stay calm and not to take any steps that had not been agreed upon with other courts. As Fersen was going to leave Prague, he decided that Johan Fredrik von Nolcken should carry on further negotiations with the Vienna court. Yet, as the count was not sure how much confidence Gustav III had in his envoy to the court of Leopold II, he informed him only about the chosen aspects of his mission. For example, he did not say to him a word about a project of the Normandy landings and only mentioned that Gustav III had 16 thousand soldiers and an adequate number of ships that could be sent to France. Fersen advised Nolcken that in future negotiations with Kaunitz he should use the same arguments that he had earlier included in a note to Cobenzl and a memorial to the emperor. As Fersen believed that his memorial was extremely important for determining future European policy on France, he informed Gustav III of an intention to send it to both, Curt von Stedingk in St. Petersburg and Carl August Ehrensvärd in Madrid⁶¹.

Three days later, on September 25, 1791, Fersen received from Philip von Cobenzl an answer to his note. It was entirely consistent with his previous expectations. The vice-chancellor stated that the Austrian envoy to Stockholm, Karl, Count von Ludolf, was authorised to immediately inform the Swedish ministry about "the steps that the emperor has undertaken some time ago as regards the courts of St. Petersburg, Madrid, London, Berlin, Naples and Sardinia and their cooperation on French matters". The minister in question was also to inform the Stockholm court about the incoming responses. Although the imperial minister did not reject the proposal to create the European league to support Louis XVI, he said that such a project required time and, therefore, its realisation should be postponed until the next spring. Cobenzl, using negotiations with courts to which the Padua circular had been sent as an excuse, mentioned that as regards a proposal of the Swedish-Austrian convention on Ostend the emperor could not engage in any project of that kind before European powers had established general principles concerning France. In a word, despite a proper form and compliments it included, the imperial court's answer to the proposals of Gustav III's envoy was definitely negative⁶².

Hans Axel von Fersen informed Gustav III about the above-mentioned reply in a letter dated September 26, 1791. At that time, the imperial court had already known that on September 14 Louis XVI had made an oath to the

⁶¹ See H.A. v. Fersen to Gustav III, Prague, September 22, 1791, RA, Germanica vol. 550. As regards efforts taken up by Karl, Count von Ludolf, in Stockholm as well as the Swedish ministry's notification about the emperor's circular letter to European rulers see N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

⁶² See Copie de la réponse du Comte de Cobenzl, Prague ce 25 Sept. 1791, RA, Germanica vol. 550; Z. Anusik, *Kongres zbrojny...*, pp. 140–141.

new French constitution. Therefore, Fersen wrote to Ehrensvärd to make the Madrid court issue a clear declaration that Spain did not believe that the King of France was really free which, in Fersen's opinion, should impress the emperor as well. He wrote to his friend, General Curt von Stedingk, too. During his meeting with the emperor that took place the same day, Fersen heard that the new constitution had been accepted by Louis XVI without qualification. The Swedish diplomat tried to convince Leopold II that, nevertheless, the King of France did not enjoy true freedom and he was forced to sign the constitution as he no longer could have waited for foreign support and long expected armed demonstration near the borders of his country. Fersen, mentioning all the pressure that had been put on Louis XVI many times in the past, implied that in the event of further resistance and open conflict the king, the queen and Madame Elisabeth would be massacred by the agitated crowd. Yet, his efforts had not brought any results. The emperor believed that for the time being there was nothing else to do but wait for other courts' reaction to Louis XVI's steps. The count, faced with Leopold II's stubbornness, ended the conversation by saying that he had to go to Brussels to reach contact with the King of France. While trying to convince Gustav III of the need to convene an armed congress in Aachen, Fersen once again emphasised that he could not accept neither views nor political plans of the French princes who, in his opinion, had always been acting against Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette's interest. On the same day, Hans Axel von Fersen noted in his diary that during the evening the emperor said to one of his interlocutors: "If the king accepted the constitution, nothing more could be done". Those were the words that the count feared most during his entire mission⁶³.

On September 27, 1791 Fersen sent to Gustav III his last message from Prague. He informed the king that the Vice-Chancellor Cobenzl had left to Vienna in the morning and Leopold II would start a tour around the Czech Republic the next day. In the same letter, he also wrote that the emperor said that if the king had sanctioned the constitution and had been declared a free person, nothing more should be done in the French case. Fersen insisted, however, that the statement was absolutely contradictory to everything he had heard from the emperor so far. The Swedish diplomat was also convinced that Leopold II would not make any binding decision until he received an official note with Louis XVI's sanction to a new constitution. The very next day, on September 28, 1791, Hans Axel von Fersen left Prague for Brussels⁶⁴.

⁶³ See H.A. v. Fersen to Gustav III, Prague, September 26, 1791, RA, Germanica vol. 550; Fersen's Diary: Prague, September 26, 1791, *Rescue the Queen*, p. 53; *Fersens dagbok*, p. 130; Z. Anusik, *Kongres zbrojny...*, pp. 141–142.

⁶⁴ See H.A. v. Fersen to Gustav III, Prague, September 27, 1791, RA, Germanica vol. 550; Fersen's Diary: Prague, September 28, 1791, *Rescue the Queen*, p. 54; *Fersens dagbok*, p. 130.

On October 3 he came to Koblenz where he met with the princes. He denied the rumour that 12 thousand Austrians and Prussians had been sent to support them but Louis XVI's brothers did not believe him. Fersen, as usual, was highly critical of the emigrants. In his diary he noted that at the princes' court diabolical intrigues were plotted, nothing remained secret, everybody wanted to know everything and all was beyond the princes' control. Thus, Fersen summarised his Koblenz experience as follows "it would be far better if all these people remained in France"⁶⁵. Still, Fersen's stingers aimed at French emigrants could not have changed the fact that his Vienna mission was a total failure. Fersen himself did not understand it. Gustav III, in turn, suspected that the imperial court's sluggishness and reluctance to intervene in the defence of Louis XVI's rights was caused by an old Habsburgs envy to the Vasa dynasty⁶⁶. Neither the king nor his envoy noticed the fact that Leopold II was closely observing developments that were taking place in both, France and Central and Eastern Europe. It was the fear of Catherine II's possible actions against Turkey and Poland that prevented him from an open involvement in French affairs⁶⁷. Yet, the Stockholm court did not notice or did not want to notice the latter fact. This was so since Gustav III, almost entirely devoted to French matters, had been gradually losing his excellent sense of the situation and had become increasingly dependent on the St. Petersburg court. For the time being, however, unaware of the intricate game of Catherine II, the ruler of Sweden decided to continue the work on the creation of the monarchical coalition. Spain was to be a very important member of the future league. Thus, Stockholm was eagerly awaiting messages from both, Hans Axel von Fersen in Vienna and Carl August Ehrensvärd in Madrid.

THE SWEDISH DIPLOMACY'S EFFORTS AT THE MADRID COURT

Baron Carl August Ehrensvärd was one of the most experienced diplomats in Sweden. He was a descendant of a noble family. He was born in Stockholm in November 1749 as a son of Major-General Carl Ehrensvärd and Baroness Margaretha Gyllengranat. From an early age he served in the

See also A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige...*, p. 272; N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, p. 119; Z. Anusik, *Kongres zbrojny...*, pp. 142–143. A summary report on the Austrian mission of Fersen see also H.A. Barton, *op. cit.*, pp. 131–137; B. Dembiński, *op. cit.*, p. 131; Z. Anusik, *Hans Axel von Fersen i jego misja dyplomatyczna na dworze cesarskim w 1791 roku*, "Przegląd Nauk Historycznych" 2008, vol. VII, No. 2, pp. 61–112.

⁶⁵ See Fersen's Diary: Koblenz, October 3, 1791, *Rescue the Queen*, pp. 54–55; *Fersens dagbok*, pp. 131–132.

⁶⁶ See N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, p. 120; A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige...*, p. 269; *Fersen et la cour de France*, p. 170, 176.

⁶⁷ See N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, p. 120; Z. Anusik, *Kongres zbrojny...*, p. 143.

army and in June 1783 he was nominated a colonel. Since the autumn of 1783 he was an Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to Madrid. He had spent enough time in Spain to be well aware of local political relations. Since the outbreak of the revolution he was also interested in everything that was happening in neighbouring France. He quickly gained Gustav III's trust as from the very beginning he disapproved of the French new order⁶⁸. Thus, it is not surprising that the king had entrusted Ehrensvärd with a responsible task to obtain money from the Madrid court for the planned intervention in France. The Stockholm court believed that the task would be an easy one. Spain was reluctant towards the revolution from the beginning and Charles IV was deeply interested in the fate of his French cousin. So was the prime minister of the Catholic Monarch, José Moñino y Redondo, Count of Florida Blanca. On June 27, 1791 Carl August Ehrensvärd wrote to Gustav III that he had heard from the minister that the King of Spain had asked the emperor several times about the French matters but he had not received any response yet. According to Florida Blanca, it was a clear sign of disrespect on the part of the emperor who behaved "as if no King of Spain exists in the world". The Madrid court entirely confirmed its previous position when it had heard about Louis XVI's arrest in Varennes. Then, it issued a regulation on foreigners residing in Spain as well as prepared an official diplomatic note to the French National Assembly in defence of the imprisoned king. Thus, the Franco-Spanish relations had significantly deteriorated. The latter fact was believed to make Ehrensvärd's official talks with the Madrid ministry easier⁶⁹.

The talks began on August 2, 1791. On that day, Carl August Ehrensvärd wrote to Gustav III that he had met with Florida Blanca for the first time as to discuss both courts' joint proposal in defence of Louis XVI's throne. Florida Blanca expressed his gratitude for Gustav III for the latter's attachment to the House of Bourbons. He also added that Charles IV had asked the emperor about France several times but had not received any response so far. Leopold II promised to send a special envoy to the Spanish court but he had not fulfilled that promise either. The minister seemed to justify the Vienna court as he expressed the view that the emperor was so absorbed by the negotiations with Turkey that until he signed a peace treaty with it, he would not be able to do a thing for France. Florida Blanca also stated that Spain would like to make an alliance with Russia and Sweden in order to save the monarchy in France. For that reason it wished the Russo-Turkish war ended soon. Moreover, the minister disapproved of a hostile attitude of England

⁶⁸ See B. Hildebrand, I. Hildebrand, *Ehrensvärd Carl August*, in: *SBL*, vol. XII, Stockholm 1949, pp. 469–476.

⁶⁹ See C.A. Ehrensvärd to Gustav III, Madrid, June 27, 1791 (apostille) and July 25, 1792, RA, Hispanica vol. 33; N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

and Prussia towards Madrid and emphasised that from the beginning Charles IV had been paying a lot of attention to the situation of Louis XVI and his family. Yet, he had recently concluded that the King of France was safe at the moment. The outbreak of war, however, could seriously endanger his personal safety. Therefore, one should wait for Louis XVI's decision on the new constitution. Only then could one decide whether to take up or abandon steps in his favour. Ehrensvärd tried to convince the minister that further delay should be avoided. The assembly could find a support from some European powers and thus cause new divisions on the European political scene. He also said that the emperor would certainly take some steps after having received news on the events of June 21. He also warned him against the possibility of the assembly's breaking an old alliance between France and Spain. What is more, he explained that if Austria and Prussia were to help to restore Louis XVI to the throne, they would demand a high price for their services. Yet, Florida Blanca ignored the Swedish diplomat's arguments and did not want to start any action without the cooperation of Vienna and Berlin courts. He also added that the Catholic Monarch would not engage in anything that might endanger Louis XVI and his family. Ehrensvärd was unable to compel the Spanish minister to make any promises. Therefore, he concluded that if the King of Sweden managed to build an anti-French coalition, Spain would probably join it and contribute with a subsidy of ten million *livres* at most, provided that it would get the money from Holland. Excluding the possibility of the Madrid court taking part in an open war against France, Ehrensvärd already supposed that he would achieve nothing more in his further negotiations⁷⁰.

On August 4, 1791 Carl August Ehrensvärd met with Florida Blanca again. He learnt from him that the emperor had sent to Madrid a draft of a joint declaration of all European courts as regards Louis XVI and France. The minister also said that Leopold II had not mentioned Gustav III among the rulers he intended to turn to. However, he assured the Swedish diplomat that Spain would ask the emperor to agree upon his steps with Gustav III as well. Ehrensvärd, in turn, tried to convince Florida Blanca that Austria was hostile to France and Prussia would like to exclude Sweden from settling German affairs. Yet, Sweden, as the guarantor of the treaty of Westphalia, had an undeniable right to intervene in Germany. According to Ehrensvärd, from France's point of view it would be better if an army independent of Prussia and Austria decided on its future fate. However, the minister was not convinced by that argument and repeated once more that Charles IV would ask the emperor to contact Gustav III and that the main concern of the Madrid court remained the fate of the French royal family. In that situation, the

⁷⁰ See C.A. Ehrensvärd to Gustav III, Madrid, August 2, 1791, RA, Hispanica vol. 33.

Swedish envoy tried to convince his interlocutor that the National Assembly would never give true freedom to Louis XVI. Florida Blanca disagreed, however, and advised to wait for further developments in France as life of the king and his family should not be jeopardised. Later on, Ehrensvärd insisted on the Spaniard's supporting Gustav III's plans. He also demanded to give suitable instructions for the Spanish envoy to Stockholm and immediately start negotiations on subsidies without wasting more time. Florida Blanca promised to send such instructions. After that meeting Ehrensvärd concluded that, despite having the Pyrenees border strengthened, Spain would like to avoid an open war with France. He could only hope that it would be forced to start it. The final conclusion of Ehrensvärd was not encouraging, though. In the message to Gustav III he wrote that: "one shouldn't have high hopes. Spain's measures are, in fact, very limited and its needs significant"⁷¹.

At the same time, Carl August Ehrensvärd got the response of Charles IV to Gustav III's letter of July 16. The King's of Spain replay dated August 3, 1791 did not meet all expectations of the Swedish king. Charles IV wrote that should everything have started six months earlier, he would have accepted the ruler of Sweden's plan without hesitation and would have fully supported him. Yet, for the time being, circumstances had changed. To effectively support Louis XVI not a force but reflection, prudence and wisdom were needed. He would be at the mercy of people if one requested to move him to a place considered as safe and secure. Thus, one should wait for his decision on the constitution. If he rejected even some part of it, it would be a signal to think about possible support for him. Should it happen, Gustav III could count on a financial support from Spain provided it would be affordable. For the time being, however, it would be useless to start war against the nation that was so enthusiastic about recently achieved freedom. If the war broke out, Louis XVI's life would be exposed to a great danger. Foreign armies could occupy the country but the people would remain hostile towards them. What is more, the intervention could further stir up public opinion against the king. Thus, one should patiently wait for further developments in France and the response from other courts on a possible cooperation as regards France. Then, Charles IV wrote that after the April events he had presented a plan of a joint action but it had brought no results. A plan of the French king's escape had failed and only made many French more hostile to the monarchy than before. Thus, it was necessary to patiently wait for the outcome of negotiations on the king's release and the restoration of his prerogatives. Finally, Charles IV concluded that even if Gustav III's ideas were not realised, he would obtain immortal glory and eternal gratitude of not

⁷¹ See C.A. Ehrensvärd to Gustav III, Madrid, August 4, 1791, *ibidem*. See also N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, pp. 102–103.

only the House of Bourbons but also other rulers and the entire human race that was interested in maintaining the normal functioning of societies as well as rights of legitimate governments. In the postscript there was a note (already known to Ehrensvärd) that after Charles IV had written the letter in question, he received a letter from the emperor in which Leopold II had informed him about his attitude towards French affairs. The emperor's opinion was similar to that of the Spanish ruler; thus, the latter asked Gustav III to refrain from any activities and reach an agreement with Leopold II whom he intended to ask to contact the Swedish king as well⁷².

A content of Charles IV's response to Gustav III's letter was consistent with the results of Ehrensvärd's talks with Florida Blanca. Although the Spanish court confirmed its interest in French developments, it was not going to immediately intervene in the internal affairs of that country. Neither did it want to start any action in favour of Louis XVI without a prior agreement of all leading European powers. Yet, Ehrensvärd decided that his ruler should immediately refer to the letter of the Spanish king. Therefore, he decided to send a special courier to Stockholm with both, Charles IV's response to Gustav III's letter of July 16 and a report on Ehrensvärd's talks with Florida Blanca that had taken place on August 2 and 4, 1791. The package sent by the Swedish envoy to Stockholm included a copy of Leopold II's Padua circular of July 6 as well as the emperor's draft of a joint European declaration on Louis XVI's case. It could be assumed that a courier from Madrid, who had arrived at Drottningholm on August 29, 1791, informed Gustav III about both documents of which content Leopold II had not initially intended to inform the Stockholm court⁷³. It is also worth mentioning that, contrary

⁷² See Charles IV to Gustav III, Madrid, August 3, 1791 (a copy), RA, Hispanica vol. 62. A copy of the same letter see also an enclosure No. 1 to Ehrensvärd's messages of August 2, 3 and 4, 1791, *ibidem*, Hispanica vol. 33.

⁷³ In the Padua circular letter Leopold II informed its addressees about Louis XVI and his family's arrest. He wrote that the whole affair was surprising to him. In his opinion, the arrest was illegal, offensive to all monarchs and dangerous for the security of entire nations. As the leader of German Reich and the ruler of Austrian countries he appealed to the rulers of Spain, England, Prussia, Naples, Sardinia and Russia, urging them to cooperate in order to free Louis XVI and his family. He advised to announce, through the agency of the ministers accredited to France, one common declaration which should calm the internal situation in the country and save the dignity of the crown. He proposed to support that action by other measures as well. In a draft of the declaration that was enclosed to the circular of July 6, 1791 Leopold II suggested to write that the king's escape had evidently proven that he was not in fact free. As his dignity had been violated many times, the royal family's arrest aroused legitimate concerns about the intentions of the ruling party in France. Thus, the rulers could no longer delay in announcing their feelings and resolutions which stemmed from the current state of affairs, the dignity of their crowns, blood relations and a need to maintain order and peace in Europe. So they should declare that they considered the king's problems as their own. They should demand full freedom for the royal family so that its members could go wherever they wanted

to what Charles IV wrote to Gustav III, a draft of the imperial declaration had not aroused the Madrid court's enthusiasm at all. The Spanish ministry proposed substantial changes to its text. The ministers of Charles IV believed that the declaration should state that European powers did not intend to interfere in internal affairs of France but it was obvious to them that Louis XVI was not really free. What is more, the Spanish court was going to accuse the French of spreading revolutionary propaganda in other countries and encouraging foreign subjects to revolt against their rulers. While emphasising the fact that Louis XVI's case was a common cause of all monarchs, a special attention was to be paid on the restoration of his full freedom and free choice of residence. Charles IV also insisted that the declaration should include a warning that any violence against the king would be publicly avenged with the greatest severity⁷⁴. It should be noticed here that Madrid changes to a text of Leopold II's joint declaration of European monarchs greatly annoyed the imperial court and led to a temporary tension in the Spanish-Austrian relations about which Hans Axel von Fersen wrote from Prague in early September 1791.

Within next few weeks there had been no breakthrough in the Swedish-Spanish negotiations. The situation had even further complicated when on September 10, 1791 Charles IV decided to extend an alliance with France. The Spanish government changed its opinion in early October after having received Louis XVI's letter with his sanction to a new constitution. The King's of France decision was a big surprise for Charles IV and his cabinet. Florida Blanca publicly stated that the Madrid court would have to ask the emperor and the King of Naples about their position towards that case. In Charles IV's circles it was also said that Louis XVI was acting against his own interest as he showed too much weakness and was unnecessary listening to Marie Antoinette who preferred to make an agreement with the assembly's leaders rather than to come into terms with the French princes. In the message dated October 3, 1791 Carl August Ehrensvärd wrote to Gustav III that the Spaniards were increasingly inclined to the idea of an armed intervention in France. The Madrid court was even considering an idea of using Swedish, Prussian and Russian troops as well as armed units of French emigrants

to. They also should demand to respect royal bodily integrity because both, law and nature required it from every subject. They should write that they had united to avenge all actions taken against the security and liberty of the king, the queen and the royal family. They would not approve of any future constitution if it did not admit full freedom to the king. Otherwise, they would unite to put an end to the scandalous usurpation of power which, in fact, was an open revolt that all governments were forced to stop. See *Projet de Lettre de S.M. L'Empereur aux Souverains ci-dessus*, Padoue ce 6 Juillet 1791; *Projet de Declaration commune*, an enclosure No. 2 to Ehrensvärd's messages of August 2, 3 and 4, 1791, RA, Hispanica vol. 33.

⁷⁴ See *Plan de concert* suggested by the Madrid court (changes in the emperor's declaration), an enclosure No. 3 to Ehrensvärd's messages of August 2, 3 and 4, 1791, *ibidem*.

against France. What is more, Austria, Sardinia and Spain were to form observatory armies as well. It was assumed that the future armed conflict would not be aimed at the French nation but would be started against the rebels. Madrid plans of the future actions predicted that France would be simultaneously attacked from three sides. The Austrians were to attack the Lorraine, the Spaniards – the Roussillon and the Sardinians – the Dauphiné. The courts of Spain and Naples were to provide subsidies for other allies, too. Yet, Ehrensvärd was sceptical about the Madrid ministry's ideas. This was so since he claimed that the Spaniards had no money and intended to obtain a loan from Holland (about eight million *livres*). Moreover, the Madrid court was not going to start any action without the knowledge and consent of the emperor. The Swedish diplomat assumed, therefore, that true intentions of Leopold II would not be revealed until the spring. Only then would it be known what the real possibilities of Spain were which not only suffered from the lack of money but also did not have adequate naval forces⁷⁵.

Gustav III's orders dated September 13 arrived to Madrid in mid-October. The King of Sweden told Ehrensvärd to try at all costs to get Spanish support as to make it possible to take steps in Louis XVI's case before the end of the year. Ehrensvärd, following orders of his lord, met with Florida Blanca and explained him the Stockholm court's point of view. The Spanish minister renewed his old promises. Still, he was not able to make any constructive proposal. Ehrensvärd perfectly knew that Spain was not ready to start any military action, there was no money for subsidies and Charles IV was impatiently waiting for the emperor's position on Louis XVI's sanction to a new constitution. Although the Spaniards were assuring the Swedish diplomat that they still supported the idea of using the Swedish army under Gustav III's command in future actions against France, he felt sceptical about those assurances. He did not doubt Florida Blanca's good will. Yet, he believed that the state of the Spanish treasury would not allow the latter to fulfil all promises. During a meeting with the minister Ehrensvärd told him about the declaration of the London court which had assured Gustav III it would remain neutral towards France. He could not dispel the doubts of Florida Blanca, though. The latter one still feared that England wished to take advantage of Spain's involvement in the restoration of the old order in France. Thus, on October 17, 1791 Ehrensvärd, writing a report on the above-mentioned meeting, was forced to repeat his old thesis that Spain was still seeking to avoid war with France and in the future it would be in the position to provide only the financial support⁷⁶.

⁷⁵ See C.A. Ehrensvärd to Gustav III, Madrid, September 15, 1791 (and apostille to the message) and October 3, 1791, *ibidem*. See also N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, pp. 103–104.

⁷⁶ See C.A. Ehrensvärd to Gustav III, El Escorial, October 17, 1791, RA, Hispanica vol. 33. See also Z. Anusik, *Zabiegi dyplomacji szwedzkiej o zawarcie traktatu sojuszniczego z dworem*

FROM THE PARIS PERSPECTIVE: FRENCH AFFAIRS DESCRIBED BY ERIK MAGNUS STAËL VON HOLSTEIN AND ERIK BERGSTEDT

While organising an anti-French coalition, Gustav III closely observed what was happening in France. Since he had had no confidence in Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein from a long time, he paid a lot of attention to Paris reports of Erik Bergstedt. The latter, however, needed time to look into French internal affairs, thus, the king still had to rely on reports written by the ambassador. At the end of July 1791 Staël von Holstein informed Gustav III about the messages to the assembly that were coming from all over France to support the monarchical government. He also wrote about a mission of Jean Philippe, Chevalier de Coigny, who was to be sent by Louis XVI with a letter to the French princes. The ambassador complained, however, that Gustav III's hostile steps aimed at the current French government made his work more difficult in Paris as he had a limited access to committees and the most influential people. At the same time Gustav III's orders prohibiting Swedish subjects to participate in works of French clubs arrived at the French capital. The ambassador, who had not followed that issue before, was surprised by the news. His weak position among the king's diplomats was also proven by the fact that he had not been informed about a mission of Captain Fieandt and Cornet König. Staël knew they had arrived to Paris but suspected that both officers had already gone to London. On July 28, 1791 Gustav III's ambassador sent a very important message that the Diplomatic Committee of the National Constituent Assembly decided to send an envoy to the emperor as to inform the latter one about the current position of the king and the queen. According to Staël, the leaders of the assembly wanted Leopold II to accept constitutional changes proposed by them. As they informed the emperor about an intention to delegate executive power to the king they wanted him, in return, to stay away from an anti-French league. Staël believed that if the French managed to neutralise the emperor and England, no foreign intervention in the internal affairs of France would be possible. In the postscript to the message he wrote, however, that he had been warned by the king about the possibility of being recalled from France. Thus, he asked for an advance payment of eight thousand *riksdalers* to cover travel costs. He also asked to order him to depart before first hostile steps were taken up. He feared that the Swedish intervention in France would expose members of his legation to a danger of being massacred by an agitated crowd. Almost at the same time, the Swedish-French relations slightly deteriorated. This was so since the courier sent by Staël to Gustav III in Aachen was stopped by municipal

authorities of Vireux-Saint-Martin. Thus, on July 29, 1791 the Count of Montmorin expressed his regret, apologised to Staël von Holstein for the incident and sent the papers found with the courier back to the Swedish embassy⁷⁷.

On July 30 news about Gustav III's departure from Aachen reached Paris. It did not reassure the French public opinion, though. The rumour had it that the intensive Swedish armaments were taking place. It was also said that the Swedish king had received a permission for 12 thousand soldiers to march through the Dutch territory. People were afraid of an attack from Ostend or any other port situated near the English Channel. While quoting those opinions, Erik Bergstedt indignantly mentioned that new brochures and articles directed against the King of Sweden were being published every day in the French capital. He also reported that the French fleet was being concentrated in Brest and fortifications in Le Havre were frantically being repaired. The Secretary of Paris legation supposed that the threat of war would considerably speed up works on a new constitution and would cause the king being given more rights. As the constitution was to be notified to all European courts, the assembly hoped that it would open the way for new negotiations with both, the foreigners and the emigrants. Bergstedt also claimed that the leaders of the revolution were convinced that Louis XVI's acceptance of the constitution would make foreign powers stop their anti-French operations or start an open war, the result of which would be questionable. Yet, the Swedish diplomat's reports indicated that Paris did not fear war and expected to win the support of foreign courts by offering them significant commercial and political benefits. Even Gustav III was to receive a proposal to renew old subsidies and sign a commercial treaty if only he decided to abandon his current policy and returned to former connections with France. The assembly's intentions were to be confirmed by the fact that Charles François, Viscount of Vibraye, appointed as a diplomat to the Swedish capital, was preparing himself to leave Paris and promised to send his luggage to Stockholm within few days⁷⁸.

On August 4, 1791 Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein wrote, in turn, that there was a widespread belief in Paris that Louis XVI would accept the constitution. It was expected that it would make it possible to avoid foreign intervention. As for the rumours of an expected attack on France by the emperor and the British, the ambassador was convinced that if war broke out, the French would strongly resist. In the same message, Staël informed Gustav III about the Chevalier de Coigny's departure to Koblenz. He also cleared up the rumour about the Viscount of Vibraye's imminent departure

⁷⁷ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, July 20, 23, 25 and 28, 1791 (and the apostille to the last message), *Gallica* vol. 476; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 219–221. See also Copie d'une lettre à Mr le Comte de Montmorin ce 29 Juillet 1791, RA, *Gallica* vol. 476.

⁷⁸ See E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris, July 30, 1791, RA, *Gallica* vol. 476.

to Sweden. On the same day Erik Bergstedt reported that the French feared of being attacked by the Swedish army. This was so since they knew that before his departure from Aachen Gustav III had promised to return there within four weeks. Count Fersen's departure to Vienna was also to deeply move the Parisian public opinion. It was believed that the Swedish diplomats would hinder French negotiations with other European courts. Yet, Paris felt reassured by the news that people in Sweden were increasingly dissatisfied with the anti-French policy of Gustav III. Bergstedt also warned his lord that the French wanted to take very original steps against foreign intervention. They intended to give out leaflets to foreign soldiers promising them eight *louis d'or* for leaving an army and 13 *louis d'or* for deserting with a gun or a horse⁷⁹. Interestingly, events described by Bergstedt did not interest Staël von Holstein. In his message dated August 5 he only wrote about the assembly's discussions on the constitution. He assumed that Louis XVI would finally accept the new constitution. The rumour had it that the king was still intending to leave Paris. Thus, the ambassador emphasised that if he tried to escape once again, everybody would turn against him. Staël also tried to dissuade his lord from the idea of intervention in Louis XVI's defence pointing to the attachment of the vast majority of the French to the principles of the new constitution and warning him that an intervention might lead to the partition of France that allegedly had been prepared by the London court. A few days later Erik Bergstedt informed Gustav III that a French envoy to Berlin had reported that the Swedish envoy, Christian Ehrenfried von Carisien, was openly asking the Prussians to stand out against France. It was not believed in Paris, though, that the King of Prussia would decide to start hostile operations against France before the next spring. Bergstedt also wrote about fundamental differences between the republicans and the moderate monarchists that occurred during the debate on a new constitution. The Secretary of the Paris legation also supposed that Louis XVI would accept the constitution which would significantly strengthen his position in the country and would deprive foreign powers of a pretext to interfere in the internal affairs of France⁸⁰.

In his next messages Staël von Holstein informed Gustav III that his instruction for the embassy in Paris dated June 27, 1791 aroused huge sensation as it had been published in French newspapers. According to the instruction, Staël should not maintain any relations with the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, thus, he asked the king what to do in case Louis XVI

⁷⁹ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, August 4, 1791, *ibidem*; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 221–222; E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris, August 4, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 476.

⁸⁰ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, August 5, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 476; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 222–223; E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris, August 7, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 476; A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige...*, p. 288.

swore on a new constitution. Although the Swedish diplomat did not stay in touch with Montmorin, he was carefully observing the French political scene. In mid-August he paid special attention to the increasingly bitter dispute in the National Constituent Assembly and claimed that the republicans were opposing all wise and moderate solutions. At the same time, Erik Bergstedt wrote to the king that, after his talks with Chevalier Domingo de Iriarte, a Secretary of the Spanish embassy, he concluded that the Madrid court did not intend to break diplomatic relations with France because it was not prepared for war. Bergstedt also informed the Stockholm court that Father Louis had been sent by the leaders of the National Constituent Assembly to Brussels to secretly negotiate peace maintenance with the Austrians⁸¹. On August 18, 1791 Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein wrote to Gustav III that Father Louis, who was to conduct negotiations with François, Count of Mercy-Argenteau and the princes, had returned to Paris the day before. The ambassador assumed, therefore, that he did not achieve his goals. The same message included information that the Count of Artois had gone to Vienna to persuade the emperor to deal with French affairs. On the same day, Erik Bergstedt wrote, in turn, that the convention on Turkey signed in St. Petersburg by Catherine II and the ministers of England and Prussia was badly received in Paris. It was feared that the Triple Alliance countries would focus all their attention on French matters. Yet, it was believed that contradictory interests of European rulers would make it impossible to form a league directed against the new constitution. In the same message, Bergstedt informed his king that the Ambassador of Spain had left Paris. He also wrote about Father Louis's return from Brussels and the departure of the Count of Mercy-Argenteau to London. In his opinion, the latter fact aroused huge sensation in Paris, as the emperor had sent to the court of St. James an experienced diplomat who was well-oriented in French matters. The French capital was also greatly interested in the news that the Chevalier de Coigny had left Koblenz for Vienna⁸².

On August 25, 1791 Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein sent to Stockholm a message that, according to the National Constituent Assembly's decree on the organisation of the royal house, the Swiss Guards lost the right to keep the king safe. In the same message he also wrote that Father Louis, before his departure to Brussels, had talked with the queen about the possibility of making an agreement with the emigrants. Louis was to say that an

⁸¹ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, August 11, 1791, apostille, and August 14, 1791, apostille, RA, Gallica vol. 476; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, p. 224; E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris, August 14, 1791, apostille, and August 15, 1791, apostille, RA, Gallica vol. 476. See also A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige...*, p. 289.

⁸² See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, August 18, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 476; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 224–225; E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris, August 18, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 476.

agreement with the emperor would be the best way of obtaining the French public opinion's support for the monarchy as the latter one had *de facto* broken an alliance with France by providing shelter to the emigrants. After that meeting, Marie Antoinette gave Father a letter to the Count of Mercy-Argenteau asking the latter one to return to Paris. Staël also claimed that during the Brussels talks Mercy-Argenteau was to tell Louis that all European powers were determined to cooperate and the emperor would not take any independent steps as regards France without a prior agreement with other courts. As for the current situation in the international arena, the ambassador wrote that French colonies were actually under the British control and France was unable to prevent it. The weak and internally broken country was not able to neither carry out an active foreign policy nor fulfil promises made to the old allies. If, however, an attitude of the public opinion as well as the way of thinking of the leaders of the party were to change, and if, finally, the king's position was to be strengthened at the expense of legislative authorities, the first country that would make an alliance with France could count on huge benefits. Although Staël knew that his considerations were completely irrelevant, he urged Gustav III to take into account both, the possibility of renewing an alliance with France and benefits that might arise from it in the future⁸³.

Last August message of Staël von Holstein was written in a similar vain. He wrote in it that everything indicated that Louis XVI would accept the new constitution. The ambassador himself was in favour of such a solution. In his opinion, the French hated the aristocracy much more than the crown, the fact that was certainly favourable to the king. Staël also claimed that in France a number of supporters of the monarchy was increasing every day and thanks to the support of the leaders of leading political parties and the members of the assembly their opinion should soon prevail. The ambassador seemed to be convinced that within six months, without any use of force, law and order would be restored in France. The most important task of Louis XVI was to be, however, to regain love and trust of the people which in time would enable him to regain the lost authority. Staël also claimed that the French anarchy was the result of malfunctioning institutions. Thus, he believed that the strengthening of the king's position as well as clearly defined division of responsibilities of different authorities would make law and order be restored in the country in a short time. All those arguments were to justify Staël's final conclusion that it would be unreasonable to advise Louis XVI to reject a draft of the new constitution. Erik Bergstedt, in turn, was much more straightforward. In his report to Gustav III he wrote that a decree on

⁸³ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, August 25, 1791, apostille, RA, Gallica vol. 476; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 227–228.

granting members of the ruling dynasty a title of the French princes had been adopted in order to facilitate to assembly's leaders further negotiations with the emigrants. In his opinion, the decree was also to convince both, the king and the princes of the need to break their alliance with the aristocracy⁸⁴.

In early September Staël informed his lord that Marie Antoinette had written a letter to the emperor and asked him to do nothing to prevent an adoption of the constitution. Leopold II, however, answered that there had happened nothing in France that could persuade him to change his previous conduct. At the same time, Paris had already known that the Count of Artois had been well received in Vienna and accompanied the emperor on his journey to Pillnitz and Prague. Yet, the ambassador did not pay attention to that fact. He was much more interested in the royal sanction to the new constitution. He tried to convince Gustav III that should Louis XVI approve of the constitution, he would gain much more power than before the revolution since the destruction of the privileged would contribute to the strengthening of the monarchy. He referred to a generally known truth that the French revolution had been started by the nobility, the clergy and the Parliament. Then, he concluded that the same revolution had destroyed the nobility and all intermediary estates between the king and the people and thus it should give more benefits to the royalty than to the nation's freedom. The next message of the ambassador included information that on September 3 Louis XVI had received a draft of the constitution. As he promised to remain in Paris, Staël predicted that the king's answer would be, in fact, dictated by the people's party. Yet, the fact that monarchist sentiments were prevailing in Paris and the republicans' popularity was gradually declining were to weigh in the king's favour. In the postscript to the message, Staël wrote that he had received Gustav III's orders that obliged him to initiate formal steps concerning his courier's latest detention, personal safety of all couriers of the Swedish king and the return of Count's Fersen horses that had been taken by the French after a failed escape of the royal family⁸⁵.

On September 8, 1791 Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein wrote about a meeting of the French royal couple with the members of the Paris diplomatic corps. Once more he expressed an opinion that Louis XVI would approve of a new constitution. As regards the possible intervention in the internal affairs of France he stated that although there was no real army in the country, people would be willing to defend their homes and freedom.

⁸⁴ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, August 28, 1791, apostille, RA, Gallica vol. 476; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, p. 229; E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris, August 28, 1791, apostille, RA, Gallica vol. 476.

⁸⁵ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, September 1, 1791, apostille, September 4, 1791, apostille and apostille No. 2 to the last message, RA, Gallica vol. 476; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 230–232.

Finally, he also mentioned that Paris had received news about the signing of the Russian-Turkish peace. On the same day, Erik Bergstedt, in turn, stated an opinion that Louis XVI was in a critical position. Both warring parties, the aristocratic and the democratic one, demanded the king to sympathise with one of them and stop manoeuvring between them. Quite unexpectedly Bergstedt expressed a belief that if the king refused to sanction the constitution or seemingly accepted it, it would arouse people's suspicion about the sincerity of his intentions and thus the republic would be inevitably established in France unless foreign armies invaded the country and dictated new laws. The Secretary of the Paris legation, however, was almost certain that the king would accept the new constitution. He predicted that it would cause changes in the government as well as reinvigoration of the French international policy. He also suspected that Louis Philippe, Count of Ségur, dedicated to the patriotic party but known for his moderate views, would replace Montmorin at the position of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. In the same message, Bergstedt wrote about people's discontent at the high price of bread and banknotes' drop in value. He also mentioned that the Parisians feared that the war would break out. The public statements the Count of Ségur stoked up that fear as he stated that, in his opinion, the emperor's attack was almost certain and the creation of anti-French league – highly probable. Then, the Swedish diplomat described relations between the National Assembly and the pope that had been deteriorating every week. He wrote that Rome had broken almost all relations with France, there was a difficult situation in Avignon and deputies were hostile to the Holy See. Finally, Bergstedt mentioned that La Fayette intended to go to America and the Count of Artois could not come to terms with the emperor. He also noted the rumour (that proved to be true) that General Marquis of Bouillé was invited to the emperor's meeting with the King of Prussia. It is also worth mentioning that at exactly the same time, on September 8, 1791, Mayor of Paris, Jean Sylvain Bailly, remaining stoic in the face of the Swedish diplomacy's insolence, refused to return to Staël von Holstein Hans Axel von Fersen's horses as it was not within the scope of his competence⁸⁶.

In his next message, also Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein mentioned possible changes at the position of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. He named Louis Philippe, Count of Ségur and François Barthélemy as potential successors to Montmorin. Although he wrote that Louis XVI was generally supported in Paris, he noted that people would immediately turn away from their ruler if he rejected a draft of the constitution. On September 13, 1791 the ambassador asked Gustav III for an annual leave promising him

⁸⁶ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, September 8, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 476; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 232–233; E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris, September 8, 1791, apostille, RA, Gallica vol. 476; J.S. Bailly to E.M. Staël v. Holstein, Paris, September 8, 1791, *ibidem*.

he would take it only when forced to do so. The possible reason for that demand could be an insult that Staël von Holstein had suffered from Marie Antoinette. When he had asked the queen for a private audience to communicate orders of his king, she had refused to see him⁸⁷. Erik Bergstedt's reports of that time were dominated by the results of the Pillnitz convention. People whom the Swedish diplomat talked to were claiming that the emperor and the King of Prussia had come to terms as regards the possible attack on France. A joint ultimatum of both rulers was to be prepared within eight days. Should it be rejected by the National Assembly, the rulers would have an excuse to start war. Bergstedt also noted a rumour that although the Prussian king was enthusiastic about the results of the meeting with the emperor, his ministers, Friedrich Wilhelm von Schulenburg and Philipp Karl von Alvensleben, were to be dissatisfied with the commitments he had agreed upon in Pillnitz. Two days later Bergstedt had already known that on August 27, 1791 a formal Austro-Prussian convention had been signed in Pillnitz. He knew the content of the joint declaration of both rulers as well. He also wrote to Gustav III that the London court had declared that it neither intended to interfere in French affairs nor would disturb actions of the other courts. In the same message, Bergstedt once again expressed an opinion that Louis XVI would accept the new constitution. He claimed that after the king's adoption of the constitution couriers would be sent to all European courts with an announcement that the ruler of France had voluntarily accepted the constitution presented to him⁸⁸.

Predictions of both diplomats proved to be true. On September 14, 1791 Louis XVI swore on the constitution. Thus, subsequent Staël and Bergstedt's reports were devoted to that particular event. The ambassador wrote that the king's behaviour while making an oath was well received by the witnesses. Erik Bergstedt, in turn, informed Gustav III that the Parisians were pleased that the king had agreed on a new constitution. In his opinion, however, Louis XVI's step infuriated the aristocrats. The republicans, in turn, did not openly show their dissatisfaction but suggested that the court's sincerity was fake. Bergstedt was also surprised by the speed with which both parties had changed their attitude towards the king. The democrats openly adored Louis XVI while the aristocrats immediately opposed him and the queen. Nevertheless, in mid-September 1791 the mood prevailing in the French capital was to be very good. The Secretary of the Swedish legation wrote that the king's oath to the constitution dismissed all concerns and there was no room

⁸⁷ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, September 11, 1791, apostille and September 13, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 476; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 234–235.

⁸⁸ See E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris, September 11 and 13, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 476. See also A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige...*, p. 290.

in Paris for other feelings but joy⁸⁹. The ambassador shared an optimism of French officials as on September 18 he reported to Stockholm that according to Montmorin's statement the emperor and the King of Prussia would not interfere in French affairs that year and Brussels had rejected all demands of French emigrants. Thus, there was no fear, at least for the time being, of a foreign intervention and France would have time to calmly deal with its internal affairs. Yet, despite all his sympathy for the French, Staël was very critical of France's current state. He wrote that France would not be able to regain its former importance for a long time. He pointed out to the monetary chaos, food shortages and the loss of public authority that, according to him, were greatest misfortunes of the country. He admitted, however, that it would be easier for the French to meet their internal needs than to resist outside intervention. In the same message, Staël informed Gustav III that he had sent his embassy's archive to Rouen. Interestingly, Erik Bergstedt's messages to Stockholm were of quite different nature. He wrote that there was a widespread belief in Paris that the king and the queen were ready to fulfil all their obligations. The sincerity of the royal couple's intentions were to be proved by Louis XVI's statements who emphatically emphasised that the constitution was good and neither foreign powers nor the emigrants could persuade him to reject it. Bergstedt's report also included information that Paris was no more afraid of a foreign invasion. Montmorin publicly announced that there was no longer any danger. The minister's words were to be confirmed by the fact that the emperor had recalled all Austrian troops from the Belgian-French border as well as the belief that Spain would do nothing that could destroy its good relations with France⁹⁰.

In the last decade of September Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein informed his king that the French public opinion was increasingly optimistic about France's international affairs. It was generally believed in Paris that the princes from Koblenz would be forced to seek an agreement with the king and the assembly if the emperor and the King of Prussia did not interfere in the internal affairs of France. Gustav III's attitude was arousing more fears but everyone comforted themselves that changes in France and Louis XVI's

⁸⁹ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, September 15, 1791, apostille, RA, Gallica vol. 476; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, p. 235; E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris, September 15, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 476. For more information about Louis XVI's oath to the constitution see A. Mathiez, *Rewolucja...*, pp. 161–162; A. Soboul, *op. cit.*, pp. 122–123; L. Villat, *op. cit.*, pp. 119–120, *The Letters of Marie-Antoinette*, pp. 82–110. As regards the motives of the French ruler see M. Price, *Louis XVI and Gustavus III: Secret Diplomacy and Counter-Revolution 1791–1792*, "The Historical Journal", vol. XLII, No. 2, 1999, pp. 444–445.

⁹⁰ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, September 18, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 476; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, p. 236; E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris, September 18, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 476.

growing popularity would make an armed intervention in favour of the monarchy unnecessary. Staël, unlike Bergstedt, was not sure of Louis XVI's sincerity and believed that it would be very difficult to get to know true intentions of the king. Nevertheless, the ambassador noted that the King of France formally forbade the Count of Provence to use the title of *Lieutenant-Général du Royaume*. Staël was also closely observing changes in the ministerial posts. He informed the Stockholm court that the Count of Montmorin had written to Eléonore François Moustier, an envoy to Berlin that was considered one of the wisest French diplomats, to offer him the position of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. At the same time, he ironically stated that the whole thing was kept in the deepest secret as not to lower the rank of the ministry through a disclosure of names of those who had already refused the post. As regards the king's retinue's reaction to recent events, the ambassador wrote that people closest to Louis XVI tried to convince everyone that France should no longer fear neither foreign powers nor the emigrants because the king would prevent hostilities on the part of both, foreign courts and his brothers. The situation in the country seemed to be so stable that the possibility of the Baron of Breteuil returning to France was discussed. At the same time, Erik Bergstedt wrote that although the Parisians did not openly fear war after the king's agreement on the new constitution, the French public opinion was still interested in the news on the Swedish armaments. The French, however, ignored those messages as they hoped that neither the emperor nor the Prussian king wanted to start war with them. Then, Bergstedt wrote about Montmorin's demission and the proposal that Moustier should replace the latter on his post (Staël von Holstein wrote about it as well) and mentioned that the former Minister hoped to become the dolphin's tutor. In his opinion, Jean Marie, Marquis of Condorcet, could be a preceptor of the heir to the throne too but republican views of that eminent scholar spoke against him. The Secretary of the Swedish legation reported also first discrepancy between Louis XVI and the residents of the capital. This was so since the king refused to participate in the "Te Deum" on the occasion of the new constitution's adoption which made people dissatisfied and dubious about the sincerity of previous actions of the monarch⁹¹.

From the end of September 1791 both Swedish diplomats concentrated on the opening session of the new legislative body, the Legislative, which was to take place on October 1. Both diplomats emphasised the fact that, due to the decree banning the re-election of the National Constituent Assembly's deputies, the Legislative Assembly would consist of people with no political

⁹¹ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, September 22, 1791, apostille and September 25, 1791, apostille, RA, Gallica vol. 476; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 237–239; E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris, September 25, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 476.

experience. They also wrote about the popularity of republican ideas among new deputies. Yet, both representatives of Gustav III did not fear any negative consequences of that fact. Staël von Holstein claimed that people loved the monarchy and if only the king decided to act separately from the nobility he would undoubtedly obtain all support and goodwill of the French. The ambassador emphasised, however, that the French public opinion would support the monarchy as long as the court was going to respect all principles of a new constitution. Erik Bergstedt did not share his superior's concerns about the king's attitude towards the constitution. He wrote that everything indicated that Louis XVI would remain faithful to his oath and refuse his support for any opponents of the new state. On October 2, 1791 the Secretary of the Paris legation sent Gustav III a report on the closing session of the Constituent Assembly and the opening session of the Legislative. As for new deputies, Bergstedt stated that there were many talented and popular people among them. In his opinion, Jacques Pierre Brissot de Warville and the Bishop of Calvados, Claude Fauchet, were worth mentioning. Still, Bergstedt paid most of his attention to "a great man of genius, probably the greatest scholar in France at the moment", Condorcet. He predicted that the latter one would become very famous if only he acted moderately. On the other hand, the Swedish diplomat pointed out that both, Condorcet and Brissot de Warville, because of their republican beliefs, were badly perceived by the court, the fact which might contribute to the inhibition of their careers. Then, Bergstedt mentioned a failed attempt of deputies from the province to make the Legislative work as a Constitutional Assembly and quoted an opinion that the new assembly might be more moderate than it had been previously thought. The same message included information about the emperor's new problems with Belgium (it was said in Paris that the London court was fuelling dissatisfaction among the residents of that country). The Secretary of the Paris legation also wrote about the French public opinion's concern about the Swedish armaments and Vienna negotiations of Hans Axel von Fersen on the emperor's permission to beach Gustav III's troops in Ostend. Bergstedt also noted a rumour that Fersen had been appointed a representative of the Stockholm court to the Count of Provence, the latter one being recognised by the Swedish king as a regent of France. Paris hoped, however, that Gustav III would change his policy towards France when he heard that Louis XVI had made an oath to the constitution as well as he found out that neither the emperor nor the King of Prussia intended to stay faithful to the promises made to the French king's brothers in Pillnitz⁹².

⁹² See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, September 29, 1791, apostille, RA, Gallica vol. 476; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, p. 240; E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris, September 29 and October 2, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 476 and 477.

Erik Bergstedt's report dated October 6, 1791 seemed to be very interesting as well. He referred to the international situation and wrote about the diminishing possibility of the Austro-Prussian attack on France. He pointed out, however, that Paris was still speculating about war preparations of Gustav III and Catherine II. That rumour intensified when the Russian envoy, Ivan Simolin, had secretly told one of his friends that Sweden and Russia were ready to support the princes' cause without an agreement on the part of other would-be members of an anti-French league. Bergstedt also wrote that he was trying to find out how advanced French preparations for a coastal defence were. Although Captain Fieandt was to hand to the king a detailed report on his mission's results, the secretary of the embassy in Paris mentioned that after captain's departure Le Havre garrison was enlarged and a big gun to defend the entrance to the port was sent there. The Danish officer, "a huge opponent of the principles of the revolution", whom Bergstedt had the opportunity to speak to, saw in Brest 45 warships in a very good condition. Then, the Swedish diplomat mentioned that a former French representative to Warsaw, Marie Louis Descorches, Marquis of Sainte-Croix, was a candidate for a post of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and he also informed his king about Auguste, Count of La Marck's, who was a friend of the Count of Mercy-Argenteau, departure to Brussels where he was sent by the French court to the emperor. According to Bergstedt, the first meeting of the Legislative proved that new deputies were greatly committed to the constitution which gave hope that they would try to restore the harmony between the king and the people. Everything, however, depended on the Parisians' attitude towards the new assembly. Bergstedt wrote that the National Constituent Assembly had been composed of people with great talents, huge fortunes as well as great names and thus could affect people despite their aversion to any individual merits. The present assembly was, instead, a sort of a council of lawyers from all French towns and villages. If the ministry was to wisely advise the king, he would be much stronger than the assembly. Yet, should the government turn out to be weak and should it oppose to the current constitution, it would lead to an unimaginable anarchy. Although republican ideas had not been revealed in the Legislative so far, Bergstedt noticed that the party of demagogues was horribly strong as it was proven by the latest fight for the leadership between a moderate deputy from Paris, Claude Emmanuel, Marquis of Pastoret, and a republican, Jean Philippe Garran de Coulon. Finally, Bergstedt wrote something that had to be badly received by Stockholm. He wrote that, contrary to foreign views on the current situation in France, the province was strongly attached to both, the principles of the new constitution and republican ideas. He also

predicted that, in the event of a foreign invasion on France, villagers would join the army in a common defence of the constitution⁹³.

Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein, unlike Bergstedt, did not think the world of the new deputies. He initially claimed it would be difficult to make an opinion of the Legislative which consisted of people completely unknown to him. Yet, he believed that the Legislative Assembly would be dominated by moderate politicians opposed to the revolution who would strive for a quick restoration of respect for the law and would try to provide real security for people and their property. In his next message, though, the ambassador stated that there were no real talents in the Legislative. The only deputies whose names were highlighted by a mob, not because of their abilities but because they had been previously spreading rebellious principles among people, were Brissot de Warville, Condorcet and Father Fauchet. According to Staël, the first was an editor of a newspaper and a republican who was said to have received money from England to incite the Parisians. The second, known for his literature, was a very vain and acerbic man who was aggravating the revolutionary party's problems through his persistent desire to play a great role and politically oppress the enemies. Finally, according to the ambassador, Father Fauchet was more crazy but less wicked than his two colleagues. In the same message, Staël von Holstein informed Gustav III that no one could have foreseen the fact that the king would be so greatly admired in France during the past two months. Yet, that message should not have aroused too much hope in the Swedish king. This was so since Staël clearly indicated in his report that people were supporting Louis XVI because they believed in his commitment to the principles of the new constitution⁹⁴.

In mid-October 1791 Paris received news from Prague on Leopold II's definitive answer to the Prince von Hohenlohe who had been sent to the capital of the Czech Kingdom by the King of Prussia to agree on plans of joint operations against France. According to Erik Bergstedt, the emperor replied that he would not interfere in the internal affairs of France since Louis XVI had formally sanctioned and approved of the constitution presented to him by the National Assembly. According to the Swedish diplomat, the fact that the emperor adopted new political system was confirmed when he had sent orders to Belgian ports to respect the tricolour French flag. Bergstedt also wrote that it was believed in the French capital that neither the congress

⁹³ See E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris, October 6, 1791 (and the apostille to the message), RA, Gallica vol. 477.

⁹⁴ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, October 8 and 9, 1791, apostille, *ibidem*; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 240–241. For more information about the situation in France after convening the Legislative Assembly see A. Mathiez, *Rewolucja...*, pp. 163–164, 169; A. Soboul, *op. cit.*, pp. 124–127; L. Villat, *op. cit.*, pp. 124–126. See also J. Baszkiewicz, S. Meller, *Rewolucja francuska 1789–1794. Społeczeństwo obywatelskie*, Warszawa 1983, pp. 17–21.

in Pillnitz nor a formal alliance treaty improved Austro-Prussian relations. Both, ministers and the Prussian public opinion, that had always considered the emperor a natural enemy of Prussia, spoke against an alliance with Austria. In the same message Bergstedt also wrote that the Count of Moustier had accepted an offer to become the Minister of Foreign Affairs. He also described defensive preparations of Le Havre and the French fear of soon expected attack of the Swedish king. He noted that the rumour had it in Paris that there was a great unrest in Sweden and relations between Gustav III and Catherine II were deteriorating. The Secretary of legation also mentioned that the notification of the new French constitution was well received both, in London and the Hague. Yet, he immediately emphasised that Louis XVI had not received any response from Vienna or Berlin yet. The King of Spain, in turn, was to say to the French *chargé d'affaires* that he was absolutely certain that Louis XVI was not really free and, therefore, he would not respond to his letter on the notification of the constitution, as long as the King's of France position did not fundamentally change. Almost at the same time Staël von Holstein informed Gustav III that Louis XVI had personally written to the French emigrants the proclamation of October 14, 1791 and enclosed to it a letter to his brothers. The ambassador seemed to favour the view that the royal declaration might deepen divisions among the emigrants and facilitate the Austrians the expulsion of French refugees from Belgium⁹⁵.

Erik Bergstedt's message dated October 16, 1791 also included information that only the Madrid court was clearly opposed to the new political system in France. The secretary added that he learnt from the Chevalier Iriarte that Spain did not intend to respond to Louis XVI's letter as it hoped that a counterrevolution would finally break out in France and other European courts would take more vigorous steps as regards the French case. According to the Swedish diplomat, the French were not afraid of the Madrid court at all as they regarded Spain as a country completely unable to start military operations. What is more, the French public opinion was satisfied with reports on positive, though general and rather casual, responses to the king's letters which came from England, Holland and several Swiss cantons. Only Leopold II's response was still unknown. It was said in Paris, though, that after Marie Antoinette's intervention the emperor had withdrawn from his previous support for French princes. Only the aristocrats still hoped that the princes would invade France in winter. Finally, Bergstedt mentioned that Garran de Coulon, Condorcet and Brissot were leaders of the republican party in the Legislative. In the postscript to the message in question the Swedish diplomat wrote that the French were very afraid

⁹⁵ See E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris, October 13, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 477; E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, October 16, 1791, apostille, *ibidem*.

of the reaction of Stockholm and St. Petersburg to Louis XVI's letter notifying both courts of a new constitution and expected the Swedish-Russian attack already in 1791⁹⁶. When Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein and Erik Bergstedt were sending their messages to Gustav III, the king was concentrated on a completely different issue, though. Certainly, reports from Paris were far from his expectations. The king must have been disappointed especially by Erik Bergstedt's latest reports that had confirmed previous views of Staël von Holstein. Yet, Gustav III did not seem to worry about French developments so unfavourable to him. From his point of view, the most important thing was to make an agreement with Catherine II. This was so since he expected to realise his political programme after signing an alliance with Russia. For that reason, he was eagerly awaiting Curt von Stedingk's reports from St. Petersburg.

THE SWEDISH-RUSSIAN NEGOTIATIONS AND ST. PETERSBURG'S REACTION TO FRENCH EVENTS

While being in Aachen Gustav III tried to regularly inform Curt von Stedingk about French affairs as well as Swedish negotiations with Catherine II's envoys. On July 1, 1791 the king informed the general that the day before Peter A. von Pahlen had brought him an extensive memorandum of Catherine II. According to the document, the empress fully accepted the idea of an armed intervention in France and proposed to create a league of European rulers which would aim at restoring Louis XVI's lost power. Catherine II proposed Gustav III as a political and military leader of the league and predicted that ten thousand soldiers would be sufficient to make the plan work. Although the King of Sweden agreed on that solution, he feared whether his involvement in French affairs would not divert his attention from the problems of the North. Gustav III also complained to Stedingk that before his departure from Stockholm he had handed Stackelberg a memorial on the French matters to which he had not received any response yet. He was also very upset about the king's failed escape from Paris. Thus, Gustav III ordered Stedingk to do everything possible to persuade Catherine II to help the King of France and his family. If necessary, the ambassador was to remind the empress favourable proposals which had been made to the Stockholm court by the Triple Alliance countries. In the same letter Gustav III wrote to Stedingk that he expected that the London court would remain neutral on France and would not interfere in other rulers' attempts to rescue Louis XVI. Finally, he stated that both brothers of the French king sought his favour and were ready to submit to the Swedish leadership in a future

⁹⁶ See E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris, October 16, 1791 (and the apostille to the message), *ibidem*.

anti-French league⁹⁷. On the same day, July 1, 1791, Ulric Gustaf Franc sent Stedingk a design of a future Swedish-Russian treaty. The Swedes demanded that borders should be slightly changed for the benefit of Sweden and the treaty should stay in force for eight years. What is more, they demanded a payment of three million roubles worth allowance and annual subsidies of 500 thousand roubles. The possibility of converting Russian reinforcements into additional subsidies was mentioned as well. The project sent to Stedingk by the Secretary of State was to be the basis for further negotiations with the St. Petersburg court⁹⁸.

A week later, on July 8, 1791, Ulric Gustaf Franc informed Curt von Stedingk about Louis XVI's arrest in Varennes. He also wrote that Gustav III demanded detailed information on the impression the news had made on Catherine II. Stedingk, following orders of the Secretary of State, wrote on July 15, 1791 that the empress was deeply concerned with Louis XVI's misfortune but did not disclose it to the public and revealed her true feelings to the most trusted people only. According to the general, Catherine II did not approve of neither the king's escape nor the way it had been carried out. Stedingk, judging her previous actions, suspected that the empress was going to take only indirect steps as regards Louis XVI's rescue mission. It was obvious to him that as long as the Russo-Turkish war lasted, the St. Petersburg court would do nothing for France. Still, the ambassador feared that even when the above-mentioned hostilities ended, the great distance, the lack of finances, the influence of the English party (a dominant one, in his opinion, in the Russian ministry), the strong weakness for leisure as well as unwillingness to take risky steps that did not guarantee a final success might prevent the empress from taking energetic and decisive steps in Louis XVI's case. In his opinion, for the time being Catherine II intended to warmly receive French refugees seeking shelter in her country which was to ensure a good reputation of their patroness. Stedingk's report included also information that Karl, Prince von Nassau-Siegen was deeply engaged in French affairs and played the role of a protector of all French that were arriving at St. Petersburg. The general also wrote

⁹⁷ See Gustav III to C. v. Stedingk, Aachen, July 1, 1791, *ibidem*, Muscovitica vol. 489.

⁹⁸ It should be added here that Russia was to pay Sweden six thousand roubles a month for an additional infantry regiment of one thousand soldiers and 16 thousand roubles a month for a cavalry regiment. A ship of the line with 74 guns was assessed for 18 thousand roubles a month and one with 64 guns – 16 thousand roubles whereas a frigate with 40 guns was assessed for eight thousand roubles a month. It was suggested that payments would be reduced after six months. They were to be then as follows: an infantry regiment: three thousand roubles a month, a cavalry regiment: six thousand roubles, a 74-gun ship: 11 thousand roubles, a 64-gun ship: ten thousand roubles a month. A frigate was assessed for 4,5 thousand roubles a month. See U.G. Franc to C. v. Stedingk, Stockholm, July 1, 1791 and Contre Projet d'un traité d'Alliance entre S.M. le Roi de Suède et S.M. Impce de toutes les Russies enclosed to that message, *ibidem*.

to his king that there was little hope that the Russians would agree to pay Sweden subsidies of three million roubles. He also warned Gustav III that Catherine II had ordered to fortify Svensksund as she was suspecting that the ruler of Sweden would try to balance between her and her enemies as to benefit the most from the difficult situation of the St. Petersburg court. Stedingk wrote a message in that vein to Evert Taube as well⁹⁹.

The ambassador, indeed, could not have sent to Gustav III positive reports on negotiations on the signing of an alliance treaty. The Russian chief negotiator, François Emmanuel, Count of Saint-Priest, with whom Stedingk had been negotiating in Tsarskoye Selo, was sent by Catherine II to Stockholm to support Otto von Stackelberg's actions. Thus, everything indicated that a final decision on the treaty would be made in the Swedish capital, on the doorstep of the King of Sweden. In such a situation Stedingk mainly concentrated on sending to Stockholm latest reports from the court of Catherine II¹⁰⁰.

At the turn of July and August 1791 Curt von Stedingk finally began talks with Alexander Bezborodko and Arkadiy Morkov to agree on both courts' position towards France. On August 1 he wrote to Gustav III that General Pahlen's courier had brought to St. Petersburg Gustav III's memorial to Catherine II. According to Stedingk, the document had made a huge impression on the empress but the general doubted whether it managed to convince her ministers who were opposing (except for Morkov) the idea of Russia's active involvement in French affairs. Stedingk was clearly discouraged by such an attitude of the Russian ministry. On August 5, 1791 he wrote to the king that Catherine II would not give any response to the Swedish proposal unless she consulted it with Leopold II. Yet, Bezborodko assured him that the empress intended to participate in the restoration of the monarchy in France, could she only afford it. The vice-chancellor immediately added, though, that all rulers should participate in such a project and thus one should find out their true attitude towards France. Morkov, in turn, told Stedingk it would be good to win the support of Britain and Austria by promising them some territorial concessions from France and assuring both courts that northern powers would not oppose such a solution. Stedingk strongly opposed the idea and argued that the best way to avoid France's partitions was to make Gustav III a political and military leader of the league. Morkov admitted that the King

⁹⁹ See U.G. Franc to C. v. Stedingk, Stockholm, July 8, 1791, *ibidem*; C. v. Stedingk to Gustav III, St. Petersburg, July 4/15, 1791, apostille, *ibidem*, Muscovitica vol. 451. See also La Comtesse Brevern De la Gardie, *Un Ambassadeur de Suède à la cour de Catherine II. Field-Maréchal Comte de Stedingk. Choix de dépêches diplomatiques, rapports secrets et lettres particulières de 1790 à 1796* [further on: *Stedingk et la cour de Catherine II*], vol. I, Stockholm 1919, pp. 152–154; N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, p. 121; C. v. Stedingk to E. Taube, St. Petersburg, July 2/13, 1791, *Stedingk et la cour de Catherine II*, p. 149.

¹⁰⁰ See A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige...*, p. 273; N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, pp. 122, 124.

of Sweden had all qualifications to head the league but he predicted a strong resistance from other rulers and eventually found that solution impossible to implement. According to the ambassador, Morkov was Catherine II's only minister who supported an intervention in France. Other members of the ministry believed that Louis XVI should seek an agreement with the National Assembly even at the expense of his royal prerogatives. Although Stedingk ensured Gustav III that he was constantly trying to make the St. Petersburg court sign an alliance treaty as well as give its military support for an expedition to France, he was so irritated by his interlocutors' attitude that he did not hesitate to write the following: "Your Majesty, these people only irritate me and I come to the conclusion that it is a thousand times harder to negotiate with the Russians than to fight with them". The Swedish diplomat's annoyance was fully justified. This was so since during his ten-month-stay in St. Petersburg he was unable to successfully deal with even a single order of his lord¹⁰¹.

Stedingk's next messages were quite pessimistic as well. Although he wrote that the Russians had assured him that they would support an idea of obtaining the emperor's consent to use the Ostend port in future operations against France, the ambassador warned the king that Catherine II might try to make him involved in French matters as to distract his attention from the North. On August 14, 1791 Curt von Stedingk wrote, in turn, that the National Assembly's decree on the monarchy and personal inviolability of the king caused a fatal change in the St. Petersburg court's mood. This was so since ministers confirmed their beliefs that one should not attach much importance to what was happening in France. After another meeting with Morkov the ambassador also concluded that neither the emperor nor Catherine II intended to take decisive steps to restore the French king's old power. What is more, Morkov's predictions that Gustav III would be abandoned in his noble endeavour prompted the Swedish diplomat to pity a sad fate of France, the king, the queen and all friends who were condemned to wander outside their country. In the second half of August Stedingk wrote about another important event. It was an arrival to the Russian capital of French princes' envoy, the Chevalier de Bombelles, who brought with him a letter, dated July 31, 1791, of Louis XVI's brothers to the empress to which there was enclosed a detailed memorandum on the September Normandy landing of 16 thousand foreign soldiers who were to restore the old order in France. On that occasion, the princes tried to obtain from Catherine II the subsidies of two million *livres* to cover the costs of the intended operation. Yet, an event

¹⁰¹ See C. v. Stedingk to Gustav III, St. Petersburg, August 1, 1791, *Stedingk et la cour de Catherine II*, p. 155; N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, pp. 123–124. See also C. v. Stedingk to Gustav III, St. Petersburg, July 25/August 5, 1791, RA, Muscovitica vol. 451.

that happened at the end of the month buoyed up the Swedish ambassador. On September 2, 1791 Curt von Stedingk informed Gustav III that on August 31 Vice-Chancellor Alexander Bezborodko had ordered Edmond Genet, the French *chargé d'affaires* at St. Petersburg, not to show up at court any more¹⁰².

Count Valentin Ladislas Esterhazy, an official envoy of Louis XVI's brothers from Pillnitz, arrived to St. Petersburg in mid-September 1791. On September 19 Stedingk wrote to Gustav III that Esterhazy had already received the empress's handwritten response to the letter of the Count of Provence, the fact that was to prove her great interest in French affairs. Catherine II's letter indicated that she intended to act in accordance with Leopold II and the King's of Prussia steps. Yet, the empress did not agree with all opinions of the participants of the Pillnitz convention. She defined the National Assembly as a criminal organisation. She also promised to legitimise the Count of Provence as a regent if only other powers officially confirmed that the King's of France freedom was limited. Then, she stated that she would receive the regent's envoy and would accredit her envoy to the Lower Rhine, residing in Frankfurt am Main, Count Nikolai P. Rumyantsev, at his side. Moreover, the empress agreed on Russia being mentioned in the regent's manifest as a country cooperating with the emigrants. Still, Stedingk was most satisfied by the statement that the empress expected to definitively sign a treaty with Sweden which she intended to support militarily in the restoration of the royal power in France. Stedingk also learnt from Esterhazy that Catherine II spoke of Gustav III very well. She also assured the princes' envoy that she had money necessary for the preparation of the future intervention in France. After his talks with Esterhazy the ambassador came to the conclusion that the Swedish-Russian treaty should be signed as soon as possible and thus one should postpone any discussion on borders' revision and take what the Russians were willing to give¹⁰³.

In an extensive report dated September 23, 1791 Curt von Stedingk wrote to Gustav III that Count Esterhazy had informed him about a content of the joint declaration of the emperor and the King of Prussia. It was confusing and unclear to the ambassador. In his opinion, the statement that in France there should be confirmed a monarchical government equally convenient for the ruler and the nation could be interpreted in too many ways. Stedingk

¹⁰² See N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, pp. 124–125, 128–130; C. v. Stedingk to Gustav III, St. Petersburg, August 3/14, 1791, RA, Muscovitica vol. 451; C. v. Stedingk to Gustav III, St. Petersburg, September 2, 1791, *Stedingk et la cour de Catherine II*, p. 168. See also B. Dembiński, *op. cit.*, pp. 102, 132–133.

¹⁰³ See C. v. Stedingk to Gustav III, St. Petersburg, September 16, 1791, *Stedingk et la cour de Catherine II*, p. 172; C. v. Stedingk to Gustav III, St. Petersburg, September 8/19, 1791, RA, Muscovitica vol. 451. See also N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, pp. 135–136. As regards the origins of Esterhazy's mission to St. Petersburg see B. Dembiński, *op. cit.*, pp. 107, 112 and fol., 119–122.

also believed that the indecisiveness of France's neighbours, confirmed by the declaration of Pillnitz, could negatively affect the empress who would not hurry on making a final decision on Gustav III's proposals. Taking into account both, objective and subjective obstacles that could prevent Catherine II's immediate intervention in France, the Swedish diplomat comforted himself by the fact that the empress, deeply moved by the events taking place in that country, would be forced, sooner or later, to take more vigorous steps. Stedingk also informed his king that Jean François, Baron of Escars would present to him an interesting memorandum on France soon. Then, he wrote that after his talks with the Spanish envoy to St. Petersburg he concluded that the Madrid court feared fermentation in its country and thus was willing to calm the situation in France as to nip evil in the bud. In the postscript to the message Curt von Stedingk expressed a deep dissatisfaction with the fact that although the empress was deeply interested in French affairs, her ministers referred to them with an icy indifference. He also believed that the Austro-Prussian alliance was badly received in St. Petersburg. Thus, the emperor, in order to appease Catherine II, would like to invite Russia to the agreement as well. On that occasion, Stedingk expressed an opinion that German courts were probably plotting something vile against Poland. In his opinion, the Pillnitz convention was to persuade the elector to resign from the Polish crown, an objective that had been undoubtedly achieved. The ambassador feared that Leopold II's agreement with Frederick William II would be a convenient excuse for three courts to act against the constitution that had been recently adopted by the Polish Parliament. As for Morkov's request to sign a treaty with Sweden, Stedingk predicted that it would be most difficult to agree on a paragraph on Russian subsidies to the Stockholm court. The empress, through her representative, the Prince von Nassau, had already promised a financial support for the French emigrants. Thus, the Swedish diplomat feared that if Catherine II had decided to give money to the princes, she would not give it to Gustav III. His concerns seemed to be by all means justified. Everyone expected that indebted princes would spend Russian subsidies on everything but armaments which would significantly delay any action in Louis XVI's favour¹⁰⁴.

Next Curt von Stedingk's reports from St. Petersburg were sceptical about the Russian court's actions as well. He wrote that the empress's ministers were far from intervening in France and Catherine II had adopted the princes' plan and was doing everything to convince the emperor to accept it too. According to the ambassador, the French emigrants would like to start war in the autumn of 1791 but the lack of the combat readiness of the Austrian

¹⁰⁴ See C. v. Stedingk to Gustav III, St. Petersburg, September 12/23, 1791 (and the apostille to the message), RA, Muscovitica vol. 451.

army would certainly make it impossible to achieve their goals. Thus, Stedingk predicted that the war against France would have to be postponed until the spring. As Catherine II did not mention a word about Gustav III's plan of beaching Swedish and Russian troops in Normandy, a representative of the Stockholm court concluded that she did not approve of that plan. The ambassador was seriously concerned with French emigrants' actions as well. Count Esterhazy managed to convince Catherine II of the need to create their own army. Not only did the empress offer the Count of Provence two million *livres* for that project but also promised to take appropriate diplomatic steps in Vienna and Berlin. Still, Stedingk doubted that the princes would be ever able to dispose of a military force capable of intervening in France. In his opinion, the St. Petersburg court's subsidies for the princes would only make the empress refuse to support Gustav III financially. Stedingk also warned his lord that for the time being he should not count on receiving any money from Russia¹⁰⁵.

In early October Stedingk's mood slightly changed. While writing about an arrival of a courier from Koblenz, who had brought to St. Petersburg both, Monsieur's letter to Catherine II and the princes' manifesto written as an open letter to the King of France, he also emphasised that the Russian court had calmly received the news of Louis XVI's approval of the new constitution. According to the ambassador, the news did not change the empress's attitude towards France. Catherine II decided not to give any response to the French king's letter on the constitution's adoption. Thus, Stedingk predicted that should other courts react in the same way, it would distress supporters of the new constitution and give European powers time necessary for a creation of an anti-French league¹⁰⁶. Although Stedingk's reports from St. Petersburg were not optimistic, Gustav III did not care too much about his ambassador's objections. At the same time, he was convinced of the possibility of interfering with French internal affairs. He also believed that he would finalise the Stockholm negotiations on the Swedish-Russian alliance treaty in the near future.

A GREAT HOPE OF A COUNTERREVOLUTION: GUSTAV III'S ACTIONS FROM EARLY AUGUST TO MID-OCTOBER 1791

On August 3, 1791 Gustav III returned from Aachen to his capital. Almost immediately his residence in Drottningholm was transformed into the counterrevolution's headquarters. Reports of Evert Taube, Nils Anton Barck and Carl Gustaf Oxenstierna were being sent there. Reports from Madrid,

¹⁰⁵ See C. v. Stedingk to Gustav III, St. Petersburg, September 19/30, 1791 (and the apostille to the message), *ibidem*.

¹⁰⁶ See C. v. Stedingk to Gustav III, St. Petersburg, September 26/October 7, 1791, *ibidem*.

Vienna and St. Petersburg were coming there as well. The king remained in touch with his diplomats all the time. Yet, he was paying particular attention to the Vienna mission of Hans Axel von Fersen. Already on August 5, 1791 he described in details his conversation with Charles de Calonne who had arrived to Aachen one day after Fersen's departure. The possibility of obtaining English reinforcements against France was discussed during that meeting. Both, the king and Calonne, hoped that the London court would send Hanoverian troops to that expedition. Yet, Gustav III quickly realised that the final decision on that issue was in question. He consoled himself, however, that both, William Pitt and George III had promised Calonne to remain neutral as regards French matters. In the same letter, the king informed his envoy to the Vienna court that the message about Louis XVI's misfortunes had greatly impressed Catherine II. He also claimed that the expected conclusion of the Russian-Turkish peace would make the empress take effective steps on France. A few days later Gustav III ordered Fersen to support in Vienna the Kassel actions of Count Barck. The king, however, seemed to doubt the possibility of inducing the landgrave to sign an agreement with Sweden. He wrote that the ruler of Hesse had so extravagant demands as if he expected that they would not be met. Gustav III's interest in French affairs was noticed by the Stockholm court. His sister-in-law, Hedwig Elisabeth Charlotta, wrote about it in a letter to her friend, Sophie Piper. The duchess wrote to Hans Axel von Fersen's sister that during a performance in the theatre the king had said to her: "I hope that within three or four months everything will be set right [in France – author's note]"¹⁰⁷.

Gustav III seemed to truly believe in the possibility of an imminent restoration of the old order in France. His good mood was not even disturbed by a letter from one of the greatest feudal French, Armand de Vignerot du Plessis de Richelieu, Duke of Aiguillon, a deputy of the Constituent Assembly known for his liberal views, who had sent him a freshly printed copy of the new constitution. Although the duke was aware of the hostile intentions of the king towards his country, he did not hesitate to write the following: "I fervently wish that Your Majesty, after carefully reading the work of reason and philosophy which until now was probably calumniated in his eyes, will give it justice which, in my opinion, it deserves. I will impatiently wait for the response hoping that the new law of my country, which the French are determined to defend until death, will be approved of by the enlightened monarch and an honest man. I will also wait for ensuring that the man wants

¹⁰⁷ See N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, p. 130; C.T. Odhner, *op. cit.*, pp. 44–45; Gustav III to H.A. v. Fersen, Drottningholm, August 5 and 9, 1791 (and the apostille to the first message), RA, Stafsundsarkivet, Hans Axel von Fersens Samling, vol. 11. See also Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotta, Duchess of Södermanland to S. Piper, Stockholm, August 7, 1791 as cited in A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige...*, p. 274.

to respect a free will of a proud and noble nation that is willing to remain a staunch ally of the people of Sweden"¹⁰⁸. As the contents of the letter was completely contradictory to Gustav III's views one could suppose that the ruler of Sweden did not honour the Duke of Aiguillon with an answer.

The king was much more satisfied with the August letter of the Marquis of Bouillé. The general informed Gustav III that, according to orders passed to him by the Baron of Breteuil, he was doing nothing for planned military operations as he was waiting for the king's final decision. Yet, he told the ruler of Sweden that there was a siege artillery in Luxembourg which could be used against France. Bouillé also mentioned the emperor and the King of Prussia's intention to issue a joint manifesto regarding France (such a document was issued several days later, indeed). In his opinion, the King of Prussia wanted to release the manifesto before starting any hostilities. The marquis, however, was convinced that German courts would not start any action against France until England revealed its attitude towards that country. In the same letter, the general wrote that Frederick William II had asked him to develop a plan of joint actions of the combined army. Therefore, the marquis tried to convince Louis XVI's brothers to that idea. He believed that such a plan would guarantee a future success of the coalition's army. Moreover, the general tried to convince Gustav III that there was the need to gather food and military equipment near French borders. Anticipating the king's orders he informed princes in Koblenz about positions of the Swedish army at the Meuse. Bouillé was not sure, though, whether the prince's Council approved the proposal and if other powers agreed on it. As for the issues of the great policy, the marquis wrote, in turn, that the emperor intended to consult his plan with the rulers of the House of Bourbons, England and Prussia. Should they approve of it, it would be presented to Sweden, Russia and Swiss cantons. Still, Bouillé warned the king that German courts might be reluctant to the idea of Sweden and Russia participating in the restoration of the monarchy in France. Even if they did not seem to oppose the idea, one should not expect their support for the Stockholm court's efforts to obtain subsidies for the planned expedition. Thus, the marquis, anticipating future difficulties, wrote to Madrid to the Duke of La Vauguyon and asked him to try to obtain Spanish subsidies for the Swedish king. According to his proposal, Spain was to borrow from Holland 12 million florins (and then give the whole sum to Gustav III) as well as to support the king's efforts to hire soldiers of the Landgrave von Hesse. As the marquis was convinced that Sweden and Russia's support would be less dangerous for France than an eventual support of Austria and Prussia, he assured the Duke of La Vauguyon that proposals presented to him had been developed by the Koblenz

¹⁰⁸ See The Duke of Aiguillon to Gustav III, Paris, August 4, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 524.

court of princes. The reason for having done so was that he did not want to discredit Gustav III who had not authorised him to act on his behalf. Bouillé was not optimistic as regards recent developments in the international arena, though. He claimed that if courts of Vienna and Berlin really wanted to restore the monarchy in France, nothing should disturb them. Yet, he was bothered with an apparent disagreement between European powers. He was also afraid that negotiations with the new French government could lead to an agreement. It would be a very dangerous example for the whole Europe if a current state of affairs was to be kept in France unchanged. Then, the general announced his journey to Silesia where he was to meet with the King of Prussia. At the same time, he assured Gustav III that he would return just in time as to deploy Swedish troops near the French borders. Bouillé was also to inform Hans Axel von Fersen about all his actions¹⁰⁹.

Fersen was informed about all Gustav III's actions, indeed. When Stockholm received George III's answer, dated August 13, 1791, to an earlier letter of the ruler of Sweden, the latter one immediately sent a special courier to Vienna with a copy of the English king's letter. At the turn of August and September the king was mainly concentrated on preparations of a military intervention in France, though. From the very beginning, Gustav III was in favour of restoring Louis XVI to the throne with a help of a small military force only. He claimed that an army of 120 thousand soldiers could unleash a war, whereas 20 thousand soldiers would be just enough to restore the king's old power. The plan of Swedish troops' landing in Normandy was ready at the beginning of August 1791. It was assumed that the invasion would be carried out by 6–7 thousand soldiers. Cherbourg, La Hogue or Fosse de Colleville was to be a place of a future landing. Yet, Gustav III significantly changed the project after his consultations with Evert Taube. Thus, in early September the plan of the Normandy landing predicted that the province would be invaded by 30 thousand soldiers and some protective actions would be performed in Flanders. As the emperor had not agreed on the Ostend port being used in the military operations, the king was seriously considering to use one of English ports instead. He was preparing 16 thousand soldiers for the invasion. He also hoped that Catherine II would provide him with an auxiliary corps of ten thousand men. The units of French emigrants were to take part in the expedition as well. Yet, Russian subsidies were a necessary condition for starting all actions, as they were to make it possible for Gustav III to pay for his armaments¹¹⁰.

¹⁰⁹ See F. de Bouillé to Gustav III, Aschaffenburg, August 11, 1791, *ibidem*.

¹¹⁰ See N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, pp. 116–117, 124, 127–128, 133–134. See also E. Taube to Gustav III, Aachen, August 8, 1791, *Fersen et la cour de France*, p. 180. In his actions against France the king intended to use the following troops: Austrian, Russian, Prussian, Swedish, Spanish, Sardinian, English, Hanoverian, Hessian and German. He was to command over 100

The king described his recent actions as well as future plans in a letter to Curt von Stedingk that was written on September 13, 1791. He ordered him to explain the empress that a further delay would expose Louis XVI and his family to a great danger. The king described his previous actions and recalled that even during his stay in Aachen he had proposed the Elector Palatine of the Rhine and the Landgrave von Hesse to hire their troops. Yet, he encountered slowness and indecision which, in his opinion, was dominant in all European cabinets. Gustav III believed, however, that if the emperor took part in the war, other German princes would follow his example. Then, the king informed Stedingk that he had sent Hans Axel von Fersen to Vienna as well as a letter to the King of England via the Count of Mercy-Argenteau. He had also written to William Pitt to get his opinion on the French matters. He had received very good news from London. George III had promised to stay neutral and was giving other rulers a free hand in the task of Louis XVI's saving. Because the emperor had promised in Pillnitz to help the French king, Fersen was instructed to insist on Leopold II and persuade him to take a definitive decision on that issue. Gustav III also informed Stedingk that in Pillnitz the Count of Artois had made the emperor and the King of Prussia issue a clear declaration that they would take steps as regards France. Then, the king demanded from his ambassador to obtain a clear answer of the St. Petersburg court as well and tried to persuade him that 30 thousand soldiers in Normandy would be enough to fight supporters of the French revolution. In the same letter, Gustav III informed Stedingk that he had started efforts to obtain Spanish subsidies necessary for financing the planned expedition to France¹¹¹.

A few days later, on September 20, 1791, Jean François, Baron of Escars, arrived to Stockholm. He was sent from Pillnitz by the Count of Artois who made him the princes' representative to Gustav III. The Swedish king agreed without hesitation to officially accredit the baron at his court. The new French diplomat reported to Gustav III results of the Pillnitz conference¹¹². In early October Gustav III received another letter from Louis XVI's brothers. Louis, Count of Provence and Charles, Count of Artois informed the king that

thousand men in total. Most of the forces, however, were to be used in protective actions only. See C.G. Nordin, *Dagboksanteckningar för åren 1786–1792*, in: *Historiska Handlingar*, vol. VI, Stockholm 1868, p. 172 (note dated August 7, 1791).

¹¹¹ See Gustav III to C. v. Stedingk, Drottningholm, September 13, 1791, RA, Muscovitica vol. 489. As regards the then plans of the king see also C.G. Nordin, *op. cit.*, p. 177 (note dated August 31, 1791).

¹¹² See Charles, Count of Artois to Gustav III, Dresden, August 29, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 521. See also A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige...*, pp. 275–276; N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, p. 138. Both wrote that the Baron of Escars had arrived to Stockholm on September 21, 1791. Yet, according to C.G. Nordin's diaries the envoy of the princes had arrived to the Swedish capital on September 20. See *idem, op. cit.*, pp. 182–183.

they had sent to Paris the Pillnitz declaration and had published their letter to the King of France as a manifesto. They also asked to speed up all actions as their enemies were doing everything possible to undermine the throne of their brother and destroy the French monarchy. According to the princes, it was necessary to hinder their defensive preparations, reassure faithful subjects of the King of France as well as inform whole Europe about the true feelings of all rulers. Louis XVI's brothers complimented Gustav III and tried to convince him that, for the sake of the common cause and people's expectations in France, they had been made to disclose to the public all intentions and promises of foreign powers. The princes were also sure that although Sweden was very far away, Gustav III would be able to overcome all difficulties and would hurry to help the king and the nation which had always been Sweden's faithful friend¹¹³. One should expect that the King of Sweden did not agree in everything with the leaders of the French emigration. Yet, he had neither time nor inclination to any polemic with the princes. This was so since almost at the same time Stockholm received the news that Louis XVI had sworn on the new French constitution. It had greatly surprised, even shocked, Gustav III. It seemed that the plans of an armed intervention in France might be cancelled¹¹⁴.

Chevalier Jean de Gaussen, the French court's representative to Stockholm, was of the same opinion as on September 30, 1791 he wrote to his Minister of Foreign Affairs that "the king's acceptance of the constitution should undoubtedly stop war preparations of not only His Majesty but also other powers that wanted to interfere in our affairs". In the same letter, however, Gaussen warned Montmorin that Gustav III had not changed his mind as he had officially declared that Louis XVI was not really free and thus he would not recognise the French constitution¹¹⁵. A few days later Gaussen obtained Louis XVI's letter dated September 19, 1791 in which the ruler of France had officially informed Gustav III about his oath to the new constitution¹¹⁶. Stockholm received the king's letter together with an extensive message of Armand Marc de Montmorin. The French Minister of Foreign Affairs wrote to the Chevalier de Gaussen: "You certainly know that the rumour has it that the King of Sweden wants to interfere in our internal affairs. Although we are far from attaching any importance to these rumours, they are sufficient for the king to present the ruler of Sweden his way of thinking as regards both, the current situation in France and his intentions to restore peace.

¹¹³ See Louis, Count of Provence and Charles, Count of Artois to Gustav III, Schönbornslust near Koblenz, September 14, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 521.

¹¹⁴ See A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige...*, p. 276.

¹¹⁵ See J. de Gaussen to A.M. de Montmorin, Stockholm, September 30, 1791 as cited in *ibidem*, p. 277.

¹¹⁶ See Louis XVI to Gustav III, Paris, September 19, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 520.

The king approved of the constitution but he must be considered as a free person with a full authority granted to him by the constitution. In this situation, any attempt to avenge an outraged royal dignity is totally unfounded and may lead to unpredictable consequences. Such is the king's way of thinking which he recommends to clarify to Franc. The king has already forgotten what happened within past two years and old grudges will not affect his conduct. His sole purpose is to provide both, inner and outer peace. A little less or a little more power does not provide for his personal happiness as the constitution, which he accepted, provides that power to the French nation. If the citizens of all estates gather around it, he will neither regret it nor want to change it. The decision was made after a careful consideration, due to its usability and with a strong decision to remain faithful to the made oath. In this situation, the king must ensure that his kingdom will not be disturbed by foreigners. Thus, you have to assure your interlocutors that any foreign powers' attempts to undermine the constitution will inflict an infinite pain on the king. Unfortunately, rumours are being spread that the emperor and the King of Prussia would like to provoke all European rulers to act against the French nation. That all rulers intend to help the king and the whole Europe wants to join its forces against a sovereign nation in order to impose on it a change of its government's form. All it seems to be so bizarre and contrary to a political prudence as well as nations' sense of law that there is nothing more to add. However, as experience teaches, especially in recent times, that even the most unbelievable things can be implemented, we are forced to pay close attention to what is so openly said on the subject. The king is far from believing that the ruler of Sweden will take part in the project so contrary to the nations' law. Yet, if he decided to participate in it, you should clearly emphasise it in the Swedish ministry that all steps taken to change the order established by the French nation and accepted by the king will be considered as an attack on France's independence. Even if the royal power was weakened, Louis XVI will not act against people's will and risk that the kingdom will be exposed to a double danger of a civil and external war. These are the motives of the king that are being presented to all courts as to dissuade them from interfering with the internal affairs of France. His Majesty hopes that his arguments will bring the desired result. You are to talk with the Swedish ministry in this vein as well as you should ask to similarly present the whole thing to the king. The ruler should recognise that the king, who has sacrificed so much to keep peace in his country, will not neglect anything that may dissuade the former from making useless plans"¹¹⁷.

¹¹⁷ See A.M. de Montmorin to J. de Gaussen, Paris, September 19, 1791 (a copy), *ibidem*, Gallica vol. 533.

It is worth noting that on October 7, 1791 the French *chargé d'affaires* decided to give a copy of that letter to the Swedish Secretary of State, Ulric Gustaf Franc. Jean de Gaussen also sent Franc Louis XVI's letter to Gustav III together with a copy of the new French constitution. Yet, the very next day the Secretary of State returned an intact package and denied Gaussen the right to represent the French court in Stockholm. In fact, since Louis XVI's arrest in Varennes Sweden and Russia did not recognise French missions in their capitals. For the time being, the *status quo* was only formally confirmed. On October 8, 1791 Franc informed Curt von Stedingk that he had refused to accept Gaussen's correspondence and stated that, according to Gustav III, there were no French missions in neither Sweden nor Russia. In the bulletin written to Hans Axel von Fersen on October 11 the Secretary of State informed the latter one that Gaussen would be treated as a private person and thus would not be invited to ministerial conferences. In that situation, the French court started ostentatious preparations to recall its representative from Stockholm. Yet, it did not seem to make haste concerning giving him orders to actually come back to France¹¹⁸.

The fact that an envoy of the French emigrants was received in Stockholm was a main reason why the accreditation of the Paris court's representative was withdrawn. Gustav III's firm position also stemmed from the fact that he was well-aware that Catherine II would approve of all his steps. Already in mid-September 1791 his negotiators agreed on the conditions of a future agreement with the St. Petersburg court. Under that agreement, Gustav III was to receive 300 thousand roubles of an annual subsidy. However, he delayed with the signing of the final version of an alliance treaty as he hoped to increase Russian annual subsidies to the amount of 500 thousand roubles. The king informed Curt von Stedingk about all those issues in a letter dated October 7, 1791¹¹⁹. A few days later, on October 11, the Baron's of Breteuil letter arrived at Drottningholm. Louis XVI's trusted agent on emigration wrote in it that Gustav III should be pleased with his efforts to conclude a subsidy treaty with the Madrid court. The Duke of La Vauguion assured him that the King of Spain had issued relevant orders in that matter. However, Breteuil asked the king to send more information on it. The baron also assured the ruler of Sweden that he believed that all misfortunes of the King of France and his kingdom would end soon if only all powers interested in his fate acted so consistently as Gustav III. Breteuil consoled himself with the thought that the zeal of the Swedish king and the Empress of Russia would make it possible to overcome all the difficulties and would destroy a cold

¹¹⁸ See A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige...*, pp. 274, 278–279; N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, p. 137. See also U.G. Franc to J. de Gaussen, Drottningholm, October 8, 1791 (a copy), RA, Muscovitica vol. 489.

¹¹⁹ See N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

political calculation of other courts. Yet, he predicted that an intervention in France would have to be postponed until the next spring¹²⁰.

On October 14 Gustav III answered to Breteuil's letter. He informed the baron that he had withdrawn an accreditation of the French *chargé d'affaires* at Stockholm because he believed that Louis XVI was not really free. While complaining about the emperor's decision to take advantage of the French king's adoption of the constitution in order to diminish the zeal and enthusiasm of the Prussian king, Gustav III wondered what the real motives of Louis XVI were. He also rejected the French court's accusations aimed at the princes as they were wrong and did not serve the common cause. Although Gustav III informed the baron that he was finalising talks with Russia which should make him ready to act in the spring, he regretted that such a delay might give rebels time to prepare their defence. He was clearly unhappy that what should be done in the autumn was postponed for the spring. Then, the king wrote that because Fersen had achieved nothing in Prague, he had sent him to Brussels for the winter. He announced at the same time that Baron Carl Gustaf Oxenstierna would be soon appointed his minister alongside the princes. According to the king, it was Monsieur who represented the French authority. On that occasion, the king expressed a hope that his own and Catherine II's example would make other rulers send their envoys to the princes as well. Gustav III also advised Breteuil that Louis XVI should turn to the King of Prussia for help as the latter was well disposed towards him but did not want to act against the French king's will. He also proposed to mediate in talks with the Berlin court. At the end of his letter, the ruler of Sweden deeply criticised the King of France and accused him of mishandling the interests of his crown and family. The attack on Louis XVI was only a prelude to the conclusion that due to the conduct of the king, Gustav III decided not to support him but his brothers. The king did not fail to emphasise that Catherine II fully supported his views¹²¹.

Needless to say, such a letter significantly contributed to a breach between the Stockholm court and a trusted adviser to the King of France. Gustav III in his letter to Curt von Stedingk, written on the same day, emphasised that his further policy towards France depended on the signing of the treaty

¹²⁰ See L.A. de Breteuil to Gustav III, Brussels, September 25, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 524. For the same letter see also M. Price, *op. cit.*, p. 456; Z. Anusik, *Gustaw III i baron de Breteuil. Nieznana karta z dziejów sekretnej dyplomacji w latach 1790–1792*, „Zapiski Historyczne”, vol. LXIX, 2004, issue 2–3, p. 34.

¹²¹ See Gustav III to L.A. de Breteuil, Haga Palace, October 14, 1791 as cited in N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, vol. II, Lund 1886, pp. 150, 224–227. See also M. Price, *op. cit.*, pp. 456–458; Z. Anusik, *Gustaw III i baron...*, pp. 34–35. It is worth noting that on the very next day, October 15, 1791, Gustav III sent to his envoy to the Berlin court, Christian Ehrenfried von Carisien, a message with an order to obtain Frederick Wilhelm II's clear declaration on the French matters. See N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 145.

with Russia. The king also revealed that Swedish efforts were supported in St. Petersburg by the princes' envoy, Count Valentin Esterhazy. Although the support of the French emigrants was not very important, it pleased Gustav III and hastened his decision to send a Swedish envoy to Koblenz¹²².

The same day Gustav III wrote the above-mentioned letters Jean François, Baron of Escars handed the king an official diplomatic note. He aimed at encouraging the ruler of Sweden to finalise talks with the St. Petersburg court as soon as possible. The princes' envoy recalled basic facts first. He wrote that it was a common knowledge that Gustav III was preparing his army and navy to intervene in France as well as he was waiting for a conclusion of the alliance treaties. However, he needed Russian and Spanish subsidies. Both countries would not give him money until they signed relevant treaties with Sweden. The king demanded from Russia an annual subsidy of 500 thousand roubles. Yet, the Russian plenipotentiary offered him only 300 thousand roubles, the fact that delayed the conclusion of the treaty. Moreover, Spain was willing to make an alliance with northern countries. It was waiting, though, for the signing of the Swedish-Russian alliance. Thus, the latter agreement would provide Gustav III with both, Russian and Spanish subsidies. Then, the Baron of Escars wrote that a suspension of the emperor's actions until the end of winter had delayed a participation of Austria, Prussia and the Reich in France's salvation. Therefore, only Gustav III and Catherine II were giving a positive example for Europe and the only thing that divided them was the amount of Russian subsidies. Thus, Escars asked Gustav III to accept the Russian proposal and agree on subsidies of 300 thousand roubles. Russia would surely compensate Sweden for expenditures incurred to rescue France. Gustav III would also certainly receive subsidies from Spain when it allied with northern countries. Then, it would be possible to determine an amount of Spanish subsidies that should be satisfactory for the King of Sweden. A letter of the King of Spain which Gustav III had shown to Escars was clear and unambiguous about it. The French diplomat strongly urged the king to make a triple alliance, future participants of which would share common views and a common hatred of a democracy hydra. In his opinion, the actions of the allied courts were to be an example and encouragement for the rest of Europe. The Baron of Escars also assured Gustav III that all his efforts would be rewarded by Louis XVI who would not hesitate to renew old treaties with Sweden on the same or even more favourable conditions. The brothers of the French ruler would surely want to award Gustav III as well. Therefore, an alliance between the King of Sweden and the empress would be the first link in a chain of events equally important to Gustav III's interests and honour. Although the baron was encouraging the

¹²² See Gustav III to C. v. Stedingk, Drottningholm, October 14, 1791, RA, Muscovitica vol. 489.

king to make an agreement with Russia, he discouraged him from signing a treaty with England which was indifferent to Louis XVI's fate and hostile to France. In the final part of his note Escars wrote the following: "Your Majesty will save France. Rebels tremble when the name of Gustav III is mentioned. A faithful France places hope in him. Louis XVI, who undoubtedly secretly shares views of his distinguished brothers, the House of Condé, most of the nobility, a large part of the army as well as good citizens are waiting for him. The coasts of Normandy and Brittany are full of people awaiting the arrival of Your Majesty's fleet. Thousands of nobles and faithful soldiers are waiting to gather under Your banners. You are said to be the guardian angel of France and a restorer of its throne. Numerous laurels are being prepared on Your arrival". Finally, Escars reminded that both, Monsieur and the Count of Artois wished that the Swedish-Russian alliance was quickly signed. He also promised to write to Count Esterhazy and tell him to do everything in his power to persuade the empress to accept the conditions proposed by the Swedish king¹²³. Yet, an interesting note of a diplomat representing interests of French emigrants turned out to be slightly delayed and did not affect further steps of Gustav III at all. This was so since Swedish-Russian negotiations had been already successfully concluded.

On October 19, 1791 the Swedish negotiators Carl Axel Wachtmeister, Evert Taube, Gustaf Mauritz Armfelt, Ulric Gustaf Franc and Anders Håkanson as well as the Russian Ambassador to Stockholm, Otto Magnus von Stackelberg, signed the Russian-Swedish alliance treaty of Drottningholm. Under the treaty, the envoys of both parties were to closely cooperate at foreign courts. In the event of an attack of another country the document anticipated sending first *bona officia* and then military reinforcements. Sweden was to provide eight thousand infantrymen, two thousand cavalrymen, six battle-ships and two frigates. As for Russia, it should send 12 thousand infantrymen, four thousand cavalrymen, nine ships of the line and three frigates to help the Swedes. If such reinforcements were insufficient, the other side was to support the ally with more forces if only its own situation allowed such a solution. The treaty also provided that both courts would no longer make peace or any other treaty on their own and without consultation. Starting from January 1, 1793 the traders of both sides were to enjoy the same rights and privileges as citizens of allied powers. The treaty that was signed on October 19 was to stay in force for eight years and could be extended for six months before its expiration date. Two separate and secret paragraphs were enclosed to the treaty of Drottningholm. Firstly, if the Russo-Turkish war broke out, Sweden would not be obliged to send to Russia neither its army

¹²³ See J.F. Baron of Escars' note handed to Gustav III, Stockholm, October 14, 1791, *ibidem*, Gallica vol. 533.

nor navy nor money. Secondly, for the duration of the treaty Sweden would receive Russian subsidies in the amount of 300 thousand roubles a year. First instalment, 150 thousand roubles, was to be paid after an exchange of ratification notes. Next 150 thousand roubles were to be paid to Gustav III six months later. Next payments were to take place every six months through eight years. At the same time, the King of Sweden agreed on enforcing his sea and land units. Both sides also committed themselves not to make any arrangements contrary to the concluded treaty¹²⁴. Thus, Gustav III had every reason to be satisfied. It might even seem that there were no obstacles left and, therefore, one could intervene in Louis XVI's defence and avenge an insulted dignity of all other kings.

¹²⁴ See A copy of the Swedish-Russian alliance treaty signed in Drottningholm on October 19, 1791, *ibidem*, *Muscovitica* vol. 489. See also C.T. Odhner, *op. cit.*, pp. 50–54; A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige...*, p. 273 (Here the incorrect date, October 14 instead of 19); Z. Anusik, *Gustav III i baron...*, p. 36.

CHAPTER SIX

WITH RUSSIA AGAINST THE REVOLUTION: SWEDISH DIPLOMACY TOWARDS FRANCE IN THE PERIOD FROM THE LATE OCTOBER 1791 TO LATE MARCH 1792

FRANCE ON THE ROAD TO WAR WITH MONARCHICAL EUROPE

The treaty of an alliance with Russia was signed too late for Gustav III to start realistically thinking about intervention in France in 1791. However, the court of Stockholm followed further reports sent from Paris by Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein and Erik Bergstedt with great interest. It was expected that the development of the situation on the French political scene would make it easier for the foreign powers to restore the old order in the country. Initially, there was no indication, however, that the events in France were aiming in the direction desired by Gustav III. In the second half of October 1791 his representatives in Paris focused their attention mainly on the issue of filling the post of the French Minister of Foreign Affairs after the expected resignation of Montmorin (those mentioned as the main candidates for the post at the time were Louis Philippe, Count of Ségur and Marie Louis Descorches, Marquis of Sainte-Croix) and on the upcoming election of the Mayor of Paris (the major candidates for that office were Marie Joseph de La Fayette, Marie Jean de Condorcet, Jérôme Pétion and Antoine Balthasar, Baron of André). Both, the ambassador and the Secretary of legation, wrote about Frederick William II's response to the letter of Louis XVI, satisfactory to the French, on the notification of a new constitution. According to Bergstedt's reports, a French envoy to the capital of Prussia, Eléonore François, Count of Moustier, had sent the assurance to Paris that the King of Prussia would not interfere in the French affairs after Louis XVI had sworn the constitution. According to the Secretary

of the Paris legation, the response of Frederick William II had raised the hopes of the French for the equally favourable response of the emperor¹.

When at the end of October false rumours were spread in Paris that Leopold II had sent a favourable response to the letter of the king with the notification of the new French constitution, Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein pointed out that such a stance of the court of Vienna would be a serious blow to the emigrants from France who honestly expected the emperor to support their actions. On the other hand, Erik Bergstedt paid attention to the fact that the response from Vienna caused a great joy among the people who were convinced of the peaceful intentions of Leopold II. In his opinion, the Paris public was worried at that time only about reports on Gustav III's plans to attack France and his intention to trigger an open counterrevolution in that country². The feelings unfavourable to the King of Sweden were deepened by the message about the refusal of the court of Sweden to accept Louis XVI's letter with the notification of his acceptance of the constitution. It was also widely expected that the French *chargé d'affaires* would soon receive an order to leave Stockholm. In relation to that case, the members of the Paris diplomatic corps warned Staël and Bergstedt that they might be forbidden to appear at the court of France. The latter one also wrote to his lord that he had become the object of hatred and vulgar attacks from the part of representatives of the constitutional party. At the same time, the secretary focused his attention on the fact that Catherine II, equally unfavourably disposed towards the new order in France, was still adored by the Paris public opinion. Noting the support of the vast majority of the French for the new constitution, Erik Bergstedt wrote that only aristocrats believed that the emigrants would attack that winter. He himself, however, was deeply convinced that without the support of the world powers, the troops of the French emigrants were doomed to inevitable defeat. In the same message, the Swedish diplomat sent to Stockholm a thorough depiction of Louis Philippe de Ségur who had agreed to lead the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Bergstedt presented him in very a favourable light as a talented man of the Enlightenment. He stressed, however, that the new minister was characterised by great ambition. The trusted correspondent of Gustav III also predicted that the policy of Ségur would be based on the preservation of peace with England, maintaining friendly relations with Spain and pursuit of an alliance with Russia where he had made many friends and acquaintances while heading the French diplomatic mission in St. Petersburg. Bergstedt also claimed

¹ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, October 20, 1791, Riksarkivet in Stockholm [further on: RA], Gallica vol. 477, no page numbering (this remark applies to all files of Riksarkivet). See also E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris, October 20, 1791, *ibidem*.

² See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, October 27, 1791; E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris, October 27, 1791, *ibidem*.

that Ségur had supposedly told one of his friends that if Gustav III persisted in his hostile intentions towards France, he would demand the return of the island of Saint Barthélemy from him. Anticipations and speculations of the Secretary of the Paris legation about the new minister proved to be premature since on October 30, 1791 Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein wrote to Gustav III that Ségur, who had taken over the ministry the day before, had resigned from it the following day. In that situation, Antoine Nicolas de Waldec Delessart (de Lessart) had temporarily become the new head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs³.

At the beginning of November 1791 both representatives of Gustav III unanimously reported growing anti-Swedish moods in Paris. Bergstedt claimed that the Chevalier de Gaussen would receive an order to leave Stockholm if Gustav III did not respond to the letter of Louis XVI. In his opinion, the French ministry was pleased to observe the growing hatred of the people towards the King of Sweden seeing it as a way to divert their attention from the domestic issues. The Secretary of legation doubted, however, that the government had acceded to the idea of declaring war on Gustav III. From his observation, it appeared that the French, nevertheless, expected the court of Stockholm to send the response to the letter of Louis XVI. Noting contrary rumours about the position of the court of Vienna towards the anti-French policy of Gustav III, Bergstedt advised his lord that, in the event of recalling the ambassador, another higher-rank Swedish diplomat should arrive in Paris, as a private traveller so far, to keep in that way the door open to negotiations if it was necessary to renew broken relations with France in the future. Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein himself was trying to reduce frictions in relations between Paris and Stockholm. He argued that the courier sent to Gaussen took orders for him to avoid the split with Sweden at all costs and since Gustav III forbade his ambassador to contact the French ministry, he declared at the court that the King of Sweden did not intend to break relations with France but convinced the public that Sweden was not going to accept the new French constitution. Staël was still trying to dissuade his lord from the idea of the intervention in France.

He went on persuading him that other powers did not intend to interfere in the internal affairs of that country. He finally claimed that all the solutions were possible in France (a partition of the country, the introduction of the republican regime, the emergence of the usurper or the establishment of a despotic monarchy), except for the return to the power of the aristocracy

³ See E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris, October 30, 1791, *ibidem*; E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, October 30, 1791, apostille, *ibidem*. Let's add in this place that Armand Marc de Montmorin finally resigned from the post of the Minister of Foreign Affairs on October 31, 1791. See T.C. W. Blanning, *The Origins of the French Revolutionary Wars*, London–New York 1986, p. 97.

since nothing would mitigate aversion of the people to the nobility and nothing would make them reconcile with those who openly supported the interests of the aristocracy. The same report included the information that it was realised in Paris that the French colonists were only waiting for the English reinforcements to declare independence against the metropolis and start a battle with more and more disobedient blacks⁴.

Erik Bergstedt also informed Stockholm about the increase in tensions in the French colonies. He put the blame of all the commotion on the British who aimed to take control over the French overseas estates. It was the news coming from the West Indies (a revolt of blacks on San Domingo) that made the Count of Ségur resign from the post of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The views of Bergstedt, claiming that Great Britain would effortlessly take over the French colonies in the Caribbean, were also shared by Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein. Both diplomats also closely followed the conflict resulting from filling the post of a Minister of Foreign Affairs, regarding Delessart only as a temporary head of the ministry. The secretary sent to Stockholm depictions of Laurent Béranger, a French envoy to Regensburg (an eminent expert on German issues) and Louis, Count of Narbonne (illegitimate son of Louis XV). The latter one, a field marshal and a commander of the National Guard in Paris (he took up that position after the resignation of La Fayette who was applying for the post of the mayor of the capital) was to be the candidate supported by the king and the queen. According to Bergstedt, he was a wise man, though, until then better known for his love conquests than diplomatic talents which he had not revealed since he had never been engaged in handling ministerial affairs. Staël von Holstein, in turn, claimed that the main candidate for the head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, apart from Narbonne, was an experienced diplomat, François Barthélemy. The ambassador's account also included the information long awaited by Gustav III. Staël wrote of mad and reckless moves of the Legislative. He also mentioned riots that had broken out in Bordeaux and Nantes. He claimed, finally, that there was a tremendous disagreement among the French, fuelled by religious fanaticism, difficulties in collecting taxes, war with the Barbary corsairs and a decline in the value of banknotes. In his view, all this would lead to the ruin of that beautiful monarchy which certainly would be strong enough to recover from misfortune if there was a man brave and courageous enough to put an end to the anarchy once and for all. Presumably, the ambassador kept his eye on a suitable candidate to play that role. That was a current lover of his wife: handsome and brave Count of Narbonne⁵.

⁴ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, November 3, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 477; E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris November 3, 1791, *ibidem*.

⁵ See E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris, November 3 (apostille) and 6, 1791, *ibidem*; E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, November 10, 1791, *ibidem*.

Meanwhile, quite important changes occurred on the French political scene. The leaders of the Left in the Legislative Assembly, Jacques Pierre Brissot and Condorcet, reached an agreement with eloquent and popular deputies from the department of Gironde (Pierre Victurnien Verniaud, Armand Gensonné, Marguerite Elie Gaudet, Maximin Isnard, Marie David Lasource and others), representing interests of the merchants from Bordeaux. Both groups came to the conclusion that the recent disturbances and riots that had taken place in France had been caused primarily by behind-the-scene activities of foreign states and the threats of emigrants. Thus, they believed that the only remedy would be to force the monarchical Europe to recognise the revolution and persuade the German rulers, by force if necessary, to eradicate emigrants' clusters in the Rhineland. Predicting an effortless victory in the next conflict, Brissot called at the same time for giving internal enemies, especially unsworn priests, a sharp blow. Quite unexpectedly, the supporters of the unpopular at the court Marie Joseph de La Fayette, who was at variance with the Lameths, also proved to support war. Having many officers in their ranks, La Fayette's supporters could expect that war would guarantee them the command over the army and a victory would restore their power and a political influence since thanks to the support of their soldiers they would be strong enough to get the Jacobins under their control and would dictate their will both, to the king and to the assembly. Very soon a purely tactical alliance of the two parties bore fruit. War supporters quite easily influenced the majority of deputies. A decree of the Legislative, adopted on October 31, 1791, gave the Count of Provence two months to return to France under the threat of losing his rights to the throne. The decree of November 9 required the emigrants to come back by January 1, 1791. And after the expiry of that period they were to be suspected of conspiracy which would result in questioning the income from their estates and taking the lands over for the benefit of the nation. It seems almost certain that both decrees of the Legislative Assembly raised great joy at the court of Stockholm⁶.

Both representatives of Gustav III in Paris, however, were very restrained in their assessments. Staël wrote that the king would probably refuse his permission for the decree of immigrants' for fear of a civil war. Also Bergstedt, claiming that the decrees against the emigrants had been condemned by the healthy part of the public, was convinced that Louis XVI would interpose a *veto* against the decision of the assembly. In his opinion, such a conduct of the king was expected by both, supporters of the Triumvirate and aristocrats. The first ones wanted to persuade the Legislative to take more

⁶ See A. Mathiez, *La révolution française*, vol. I (*La chute de la royauté 1787-1792*), Paris 1928, pp. 186-188; idem, *Rewolucja francuska*, Warszawa 1956, pp. 169-171; A. Soboul, *Rewolucja francuska 1789-1799*, Warszawa 1951, p. 129; L. Villat, *La révolution et l'Empire (1789-1815)*, vol. I (*Les Assemblées révolutionnaires 1789-1799*), Paris 1947, p. 126.

rational decisions and convince the monarchical Europe of full freedom of the king; the others, hoped that it would lead to a conflict of the assembly with Louis XVI who, seeing failure of all his efforts to maintain the country in peace, order and security, would decide to throw himself into the arms of the emigrants and risk one more attempt to escape. Bergstedt himself, however, did not approve of that idea. He considered the king's departure from Paris to be the last resort, implementable only in case of a serious riot in the country and if Louis XVI could not make the proper use of executive authority granted to him by the new constitution. The secretary expressed hope that if the king's escape was carried out one day, this time it would be well prepared and would finish successfully. He also prophesied that the war would break out no earlier than the following spring. Bergstedt's reports written on November 10, 1791 included information that Catherine II's response to the letter of Louis XVI on the notification of the new constitution had reached Paris (Simolin did not, however, hand over the letter of the empress to the French due to the fact that the king had not yet appointed a new head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs). The Secretary of the Paris legation also claimed that although Narbonne was still the most prospective candidate for the post of a Minister of Foreign Affairs, the assembly, being afraid of filling the position of the head of that ministry with a man without any diplomatic experience, was more eager to appoint him as a Minister of War. At the same time, Staël von Holstein informed his lord that French newspapers had published information about the signing of a Swedish-Russian alliance treaty. There would be nothing interesting in it if it was not for the prosaic fact that at the time the ambassador himself had not yet received any information about that from Stockholm⁷.

It was not until November 13, 1791 that a Russian envoy to Paris, Ivan M. Simolin, showed Staël a letter from Stackelberg with information about the signing of the Drottningholm treaty. In a message written the same day to Stockholm, the ambassador sent information that Louis XVI had resorted to a *veto* over the decree against the emigrants. In his view, the king had done so in order to see if it was possible to govern effectively in accordance with the principles of the constitution accepted by him. Justifying that decision of the king (Louis XVI could not accept all the decrees of the Legislative without reservation since it might arouse suspicion as to his loyalty), Staël mentioned rumours that those were Louis Auguste, Baron of Breteuil, François, Count of Mercy-Argenteau and Johann Franz, Baron von Thugut who actually guided the actions of both, the King and the Queen of France.

⁷ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, November 10, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 477; E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris, November 10, 1791 together with apostille and apostille No. 2, *ibidem*.

The ambassador regarded the rumours as very probable ones because he could not rationally explain the current proceeding of the court. At the same time, Erik Bergstedt wrote to Gustav III that the *veto* of the king over the decree on emigrants had been received positively by the moderate and negatively by the republicans and aristocrats. The Swedish diplomat fully supported the position of Louis XVI, considering the decrees of the assembly to be ridiculous. He claimed that the ministry had finally decided to be through with the weakness of the court and the *veto* was supposed to be the ultimate confirmation of the king's full freedom. In his opinion, after the rejection of the decree on emigrants by Louis XVI, the situation in France would hopefully stabilise since, for the time being, the king had given up a thought of escape following a course of events and not losing hope for maintaining peace in the country. However, Bergstedt also drew Gustav III's attention to rumours circulating around Paris concerning vague and mysterious projects of the royal court. It was also quite commonly believed that although messieurs de Lameth, being at the time the main court advisers, thought that they had a considerable influence on the queen's conduct, in fact, Marie Antoinette did not let them in on her secrets. In the postscript to the quoted message, Bergstedt also mentioned that Jacques Necker could possibly return to Paris. He was sure that it was the ambassador's wife who was making every effort to bring her father to the French capital and wanted to stay in Paris even if Staël had been dismissed from his post⁸.

On November 16, 1791 the Mayor of Paris was elected. The split among the Feuillants and the court's attacks on La Fayette resulted in ruining his candidacy. The new mayor of the capital was a Jacobin, Jérôme Pétion. The king and the queen were contented with the election result for they were convinced that the revolutionaries' successes would bring the latter ones to ruin⁹. Pétion's victory was not a big surprise to Erik Bergstedt. A few days before the election he had already predicted that Pétion would be the head of the municipal authorities of the French capital. In the message of November 17, 1791 the Swedish diplomat wrote mainly about the Swedish-Russian treaty which was a great sensation in Paris. He also devoted some attention to the rumours concerning concentration of the Swedish troops in Gothenburg as well as the alleged accreditation of Hans Axel von Fersen alongside the princes in Koblenz. Bergstedt also warned Gustav III that the Jacobin Club had put forward a proposal to request explanations from Russia and Sweden and to issue a firm declaration towards the German princes

⁸ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, November 13, 1791, *ibidem*; E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris, November 13, 1791 with apostille No. 2 to the message, *ibidem*.

⁹ See A. Mathiez, *Rewolucja...*, pp. 163–164; L. Villat, *op. cit.*, p. 126; *The Letters of Marie Antoinette, Fersen and Barnave* [further on: *The Letters of Marie Antoinette*], O.G. Heidenstam (ed.), London 1926, p. 170.

providing shelter to the emigrants. However, he reassured his lord by saying that the views of the clubs were inconsistent with the views of Lameth's supporters, dominating in the assembly. At the end of his account, the secretary came to the conclusion that a firm conduct towards foreign courts could be a good way to gain popularity both, with the court and the ministry. He, therefore, predicted that if Delessart became a Minister of Foreign Affairs, he would be more determined in his actions than his predecessor. He also expected decisive actions against the German princes in the near future. Staël's von Holstein message written a few days later included, in turn, information about the uprising of the blacks on Martinique. The ambassador also wrote that the situation in France was becoming more and more alarming. He mentioned Delessart as the main candidate for the post of the head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He claimed, however, that his nomination would be announced only when the right candidate for the Minister of Internal Affairs was found¹⁰.

At the end of November 1791 both representatives of Gustav III in Paris wrote about a serious internal crisis in France. According to Erik Bergstedt, the country resembled a volcano on the verge of explosion and a fermentation of minds could lead to civil war. A revolt in the colonies, riots in many provinces, great animosity between the parties, a huge budget deficit, the parody of the executive and little public confidence in the Legislative Assembly were, in his opinion, the symptoms of a serious illness eating France away. Bergstedt also mentioned an idea of establishing the National Supreme Court to prosecute supporters of a counterrevolution; the court was to announce that the princes were traitors and the enemies of the homeland. The authors of the project expected that in that way they would prevent the king from exercising his *veto* right. Noting the rumours about an expected attack of the princes on France, the Secretary of legation in Paris warned, however, Gustav III that if the princes' army was not supported by some great power, it would be massacred by so-called patriots. A message of Staël von Holstein was written in the similar vein. He wrote to his lord that the situation in France was becoming increasingly difficult. Instead of working with the king on ensuring obedience to the laws, the assembly was doing everything to weaken the executive power, impede actions of the judiciary and introduce chaos in the minds of the people. The ambassador also mentioned that it was rumoured in Paris that the king would try to escape from the capital for the second time. In his view, the rumours had greatly weakened the devotion of the people to Louis XVI and contributed to strengthening the position of the supporters of the republican idea. For that reason, the Jacobin

¹⁰ See E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris, November 13 and 17, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 477; E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, November 20, 1791, apostille, *ibidem*.

Club gained a great advantage in Paris. In the further part of his account, Staël also wrote about the riots on religious grounds which had occurred in Caen in Normandy, Montpellier and Avignon. Thus, the ambassador predicted that party struggles, financial difficulties, contempt for religion and a complete anarchy would inevitably lead to the outbreak of a counterrevolution. Despite the fact that a representative of the court of Stockholm to Paris thought that a counterrevolution might even be fully successful, he did not support such a solution. He believed that an efficient government, if only it was loved and trusted by the people, would be able to remove the defects of the present constitution and lead to the reinforcement of the new order. Needless to say, expressing such views could only lead to the reinforcement of an old reluctance of Gustav III to the ambassador¹¹.

Meanwhile, the situation in France became more and more complicated. On November 29, 1791 the Legislative Assembly passed a decree on depriving unsworn priests of salary, unless they swear a new oath of allegiance to the constitution, and authorising local administration to remove disobedient priests from their place of residence in case of riots. On the same day, the Legislative passed a decree calling on the king to “demand that electors of Trier and Mainz and other princes of the empire giving asylum to the French fugitives put an end to emigrants’ clusters on the border and a military recruitment tolerated by them”. Moreover, the deputies wanted the king to conclude negotiations with the emperor and the German Reich on the payment of a compensation to German princes having fiefdom in France and dispossessed by the Law of August 4, 1789 as soon as possible. Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette were glad to watch warlike actions of the Brissotists. They thought that in that situation they could easily persuade Leopold II, still unwilling to interfere in the internal French affairs, to start the armed intervention. Lameth’s supporters had a totally different opinion on the problem. Not knowing about secret negotiations of Louis XVI with foreign courts, they were indignant at the assembly for opposing their indications and with the Brissotists for the attacks on the ministers from their party. In search of support against the Jacobins, they got closer and closer to the royal court. Being staunch opponents of war, they advised the king to divide the decrees of the Legislative into two parts, accepting only the decree depriving the Count of Provence of a possible regency and the decree under which he was to send an ultimatum to electors of Trier and Mainz as well as to negotiate with the emperor while imposing his *veto* over all the repressions against the emigrants and unsworn priests. In that way, the Triumvirate was trying to attract all the conservative elements to their party aiming at the same

¹¹ See E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris, November 24, 1791, *ibidem*; E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, November 27, 1791, apostille, *ibidem*.

time at gaining superior's trust by showing him that the constitution grants the King of France a real power. The Lameths hoped that peacefully disposed Leopold II would persuade the electors to make voluntary concessions which would allow them to avoid war while an aggressive attitude, which they recommended to Louis XVI, would restore his lost popularity¹².

On December 1, 1791 Erik Bergstedt went on claiming that the situation in France was very tense and the activities of the counterrevolutionaries on the one hand, and the Clubbists on the other, contributed to the deepening of the government's problems. He pointed out, however, that the recent resolutions of the assembly concerning the German princes were very well received by the public. In his view, supporters of the constitution had finally decided to solve the problem of the emigrants getting ready for war if traditional diplomatic means failed. The Royal Council also accepted that point of view, deciding to send a declaration of Louis XVI to the electors of Mainz and Trier edited in a very firm tone. In Swedish diplomat's opinion, that step of the French ministry did not mean, however, its consent to the commencement of military actions. The Royal Council was almost certain of a peaceful attitude of the emperor and King of Prussia. The same account also included a statement that Gaussen's reports from Stockholm, supposing that Gustav III was going to lead his troops against France, soon resulted in the growth of anti-Swedish moods in Paris. Bergstedt also claimed that a group of young people seized by the "fanaticism of liberty" was considering the ideas of murdering the princess, the leaders of the emigration. During one meeting of the Jacobin Club, Edmond Louis Dubois-Crancé, supposedly said what follows: "If the new Porsena, Gustav, wants to raise arms against France, new Scaevola, namely I myself, will knife him in the middle of his camp". Following him at the podium, a man called Molin put forward a similar resolution. Both of them were greatly applauded by those gathered. According to the secretary, that kind of a discussion was an evidence of what effusive and passion-driven people were capable of. He also warned his lord that freedom fanatics would definitely try to put their threats into action if Gustav III wanted to implement his projects aimed against France. Bergstedt wrote in the same message that the French ministry received regular reports on the situation in Koblenz. They showed that the council of princes was split in opinions. One party, representing the interests of the clergy, headed by the Bishop of Arras, wished to restore the former estates, rights and prerogatives of the clergy while the second party, consisting mainly of the nobility, aimed, in turn, at the conclusion of the honourable agreement with the new French government. Supposedly, the representatives of that

¹² See A. Mathiez, *Rewolucja...*, pp. 171–173; N. Åkeson, *Gustaf III:s förhållande till franska revolutionen*, vol. II, Lund 1886, p. 193; *The Letters of Marie Antoinette*, pp. 178–184; *Historia dyplomacji*, vol. I (do 1871 r.), W.M. Chwostow et al. (ed.), Warszawa 1973, pp. 439–440.

group had even a project according to which the nobility agreed to resign from all the privileges in case of the establishment of the Upper House consisting of 1,166 members elected from among the owners with the yearly income of at least 30 thousand *livres*¹³.

A few days later, Erik Bergstedt wrote that Parisians were openly talking about a letter of the emperor to Catherine II and the King of Spain. In the letter, Leopold II had explained the both monarchs the motives of his previous conduct. He had also asked them not to undertake militarily intervention in the French internal affairs. The Swedish diplomat enquired Delessart if the rumours about the emperor's letter were true but did not receive a satisfactory reply. The head of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated only that he was convinced about a peaceful attitude of the emperor and he considered such a letter to be very probable to have been written. In connection with that case, Bergstedt wrote that the French public opinion was convinced that the position of the court of Vienna would lead to a dissonance between Russia and Sweden as the emperor would certainly be able to convince Catherine II that there was no need for the intervention in France. The secretary was also convinced that in his dispatches Simolin dissuaded the empress from the idea of sending Russian troops to the West of Europe. Yet, Simolin himself confirmed the information on the letter of the emperor to the ruler of Russia. He claimed at the same time that Leopold II had written in a similar vein to the King of Sweden and to all the courts concerned about the French issues. In the same account, Erik Bergstedt wrote that the sessions of the National Assembly were becoming more and more stormy. The opposition reportedly crippled the executive power while the Jacobins fanaticism was directed mainly against the king who was accused of an intention of re-escaping from Paris. According to the secretary, the accusations were the prelude of the Jacobins' demand to introduce a republican system in France. At the end of his message, Bergstedt informed the court of Stockholm that the candidate of the war party, Louis, Count of Narbonne, would soon replace Louis Duportail at the position of a Minister of War¹⁴.

On December 8, 1791 Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein wrote to Gustav III that the emperor's note to the European courts gladdened both, democrats and aristocrats. The former ones thought that it ultimately confirmed the freedom of their king. The latter ones, in turn, hoped that one day the emperor would get involved in the French internal affairs. In the same message, the ambassador informed the king that the response of the Archbishop of Mainz, Frederick Charles von Erthal, to the declaration of Louis XVI had

¹³ See E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris, December 1, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 477.

¹⁴ See E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris, December 4, 1791 and apostille to the message, *ibidem*.

not fulfilled the widespread expectations and, therefore, the public opinion encouraged the government to declare war on the German princes that provided the emigrants with refuge. It was believed in France that neither Austria nor Prussia would offer help to the princes of the Rhine. In the same message, Staël once again showed his political sympathies stating that existence of the party of the princes on the banks of the Rhine refuted all the arguments put forward by the moderate people for when they talked about necessity to bring order in the country, the response was that they wanted to support a counterrevolution; and when they demanded the rapprochement of the clubs, the reaction was that the revolution was not over and that the clubs were necessary to mobilise the people against their enemies. Based on those considerations, the ambassador concluded that France might need war, as it could lead to a political turning point, beneficial for its future¹⁵.

On the same day, Erik Bergstedt assured his lord that the emperor was not going to take up arms against France in the near future. He was persuaded of this by Franz Paul von Blumendorf, the Austrian *chargé d'affaires* at Paris, who also claimed that the example of the emperor should prompt Gustav III and Catherine II to recognise freedom of Louis XVI which, in turn, would lead to the situation when calling away the Swedish ambassador from France would be unnecessary. For the time being, however, the Paris diplomatic corps was tensely awaiting a response of Gustav III to the second note of the Chevalier de Gaussen. Although the French ministry expected that the note would be accepted by the court of Stockholm, it sent Gaussen six thousand *livres*, just in case, to make it possible for him to return to France. In the same account, Bergstedt wrote that the French Ambassador to Vienna, Emmanuel Marie, Marquis of Noailles, had been requested to demand good services from the emperor in talks with the electors and the German princes while Marshal Nicolas Lückner had received orders to put the French troops on high alert. The Swedish diplomat stated on that occasion that the public wanted war hoping that the hostility between the parties would disappear as a result of bloodshed. The war with Germany was also perceived as means to strengthen the new constitution. Mentioning the serious internal problems, with which France had been struggling for a long time, Bergstedt came to the conclusion that a civil war would not break out as long as the king supported the constitution since the nobility in the provinces was too weak and the people would not shed blood just to restore privileges of the nobility, tithes of the clergy and political influence and Avignon of the pope¹⁶.

¹⁵ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, December 8, 1791, apostille, *ibidem*.

¹⁶ See E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris, December 8, 1791, *ibidem*. The same account also included information that Charles Maurice de Talleyrand, Bishop of Autun, had taken steps in order to win a nomination for the position of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. See *ibidem*.

It should be noted that the French ministry's anticipation as regards the response of the court of Stockholm was somewhat premature. It was not before December 8, 1791 that Chevalier Jean de Gausсен filed his second note in Stockholm concerning the notification of the new French constitution by the court of Sweden. He informed in it that his ministry had ordered him to send the Secretary of State a letter of Louis XVI once again with notification of the constitution, a copy of a letter of the King of France to the National Assembly, the text of the new constitution and a copy of a letter sent to him by the former French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Armand Marc de Montmorin. On that occasion, Gausсен expressed a belief that the Swedish king, being better informed in the whole affair than previously, would not hesitate that time to accept the consignment. He warned Ulric Gustaf Franc, however, that if that time the attempt was not successful, he would be forced, according to the instructions of his court, to leave Stockholm. Thus, he asked the Secretary of State in advance to issue a passport for him for the way back to France¹⁷. Needless to say, like in the previous case, Gustav III, not intending to give any response to the French note, decided to delay notifying Gausсен of his final decision on the matter as long as possible.

Meanwhile, the representatives of Gustav III in Paris sent more and more interesting accounts to the king. Erik Bergstedt wrote that Louis XVI had demanded from the assembly a subsidy for war against the emigrants emphasising at the same time his commitment to the constitution and a desire to defend it. The secretary doubted, however, that France, being totally unprepared for war, could actually start any military actions. Thus, Bergstedt devoted more space to the actions taken by Lameth's supporters, described by him as the ministerial party. In his view, the supporters of a Triumvirate, helped by the Feuillants Club, had decided to cripple Jacobins' influence and lead to unification of all the moderate in their ranks. Lameth's supporters were also going to work hard on spreading their ideas among the public and maintaining the constitution in its present form seeking to repel all the attacks on the basic law of both, the republicans and true aristocrats¹⁸. It seemed that the Lameth brothers were on the track to achieve their goals since Louis XVI announced his *veto* over the decrees against the unsworn priests and emigrants. On December 14, 1791 he solemnly declared in the assembly that "as the representative of the nation, he feels insulted" and, consequently, informed the Elector of Trier that "if by January 15 he does not prohibit the clusters of emigrants in his country and all hostile actions of the French who have taken refuge there, he will be considered an

¹⁷ See The note of J. de Gausсен given to U.G. Franc, Stockholm, December 8, 1791, *ibidem*, Gallica vol. 533.

¹⁸ See E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris, December 11, 1791, *ibidem*, Gallica vol. 477.

enemy of France". Lameth's supporters did not know, however, that as soon as the king had returned to his palace he wrote a letter to Louis Auguste, Baron of Breteuil, asking him to inform the emperor and other rulers that he ardently hoped that the Elector of Trier would not comply with his ultimatum: "the revolutionary party would then become more arrogant and this success would stop the machinery of revolution for some time". Believing in French inability to take military actions, Louis XVI only maintained an appearance of being a genuine supporter of war with the German princes. In fact, he wanted to bring about the situation "in which the nation in its misfortune would see no other way but to throw itself into his arms". So he was driving his country to war, hoping that it would end up in a disaster, leading to the restoration of his unlimited power¹⁹.

Obviously, Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein did not have the slightest idea of the backstage intrigues of Louis XVI. On December 15, 1791 he wrote to Stockholm that the king's speech in the assembly had induced him to send a special courier to Hamburg. At the same time, he paid attention to the fact that almost everyone in France wanted war except for a few members of the Jacobin Club (in that case it was a group of democrats gathered around Maximilien Robespierre). Informing Gustav III about the speech of the French Minister of War, who told the deputies that he would be able to call up 150 thousand people, the ambassador said, however, that the army would certainly be disorganised and undisciplined. Staël also persuaded his lord that although the state of finances could be a serious obstacle on the road to a victory, the French felt confident because everything indicated that the emperor and the King of Prussia would remain neutral in their war against the German princes. The Swedish diplomat predicted that in case of attack on France, the people, attached to the principles of their constitution and convinced that they were fighting for their own cause, were expected to make a great sacrifice. In Staël's opinion, offensive war would be much more dangerous for France as it could exacerbate internal problems plaguing the country. The ambassador also reached the conclusion that Louis XVI should benefit from a current crisis. The decisiveness and determination of the ministry should, in fact, shatter the rebels' hopes that war would deepen anarchy, consequently turning against the king. According to Staël, the pro-King mood prevailed in Paris and the public favoured the constitutional party. The Swedish diplomat did not hide his affection towards the ruling Feuillants since, in his opinion, they were the only power able to stop the subversive intentions of the Jacobin Club which could lead to the destruction of both, its own country and the whole Europe if its members (the

¹⁹ See A. Mathiez, *Rewolucja...*, p. 174; L. Villat, *op. cit.*, pp. 128–130; A. Soboul, *op. cit.*, pp. 130–131; T.C. W. Blanning, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

Brissotists) seized power in France. Staël also warned his lord that the Jacobins would be willing to start a revolution in Sweden in the French fashion just to thwart the plans of the court of Stockholm. He himself, however, clearly underestimated the danger associated with them. It should be noted here that only in the above-quoted message did the ambassador mention the public threats of Dubois-Crancé against Gustav III. Actually, he commented on Dubois-Crancé's speech as the one that received an applause by only a few galley slaves who were in the stands of the Jacobin Club²⁰.

In the next message sent to Stockholm, Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein wrote again about a good reception of the last moves of the king and the government by the French public opinion. He also mentioned the mission of Louis Claude, Chevalier de Sainte-Croix, who had been sent to Koblenz with the task of inducing the Elector of Trier to withdraw his support for the emigrants. The ambassador considered the negotiations with the elector to be very difficult, yet he was convinced that if there was anyone who could bring them to a happy end it would be Sainte-Croix. Staël also wrote very warmly about the French Minister of War adding that the intellect, the activeness and the great name of the Count of Narbonne had made great impression on all observers of his actions. According to the Swedish diplomat, the nomination of Narbonne (the protégé of Louis XVI's aunts) supposedly confirmed a good will of the king intending to follow the spirit and letter of the new constitution. The same report included a statement that although democratic daily papers were printing a series of texts against Gustav III, the politicians associated with the democratic party were convinced of the possibility of the new rapprochement with Sweden. Staël did not think, however, that in the near future a serious proposal could be put forward in that regard. Exactly at the same time, Erik Bergstedt wrote to the king that Paris was talking about the future war with the emigrants and the German princes. He also praised Narbonne whose energy and activeness truly embarrassed his opponents both, from the aristocratic and the republican parties. Mentioning an inspection tour of the new minister (Narbonne had left Paris to visit garrisons on the French border), Bergstedt did not fail to point out that Mathieu Jean, Duke of Montmorency had become his adjutant. According to the secretary, choosing the adjutant with such a great name, Narbonne wanted to convince the old aristocracy of the need to join in the public life. Bergstedt was also convinced that if the Chevalier de Sainte-Croix was negatively received in Koblenz, the war would inevitably break out before January 15 the following year²¹.

²⁰ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, December 15, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 477.

²¹ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, December 18, 1791, apostille, *ibidem*; E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris, December 18, 1791, *ibidem*.

On December 22, 1791 Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein came to the conclusion that the situation in France was so complicated that he was not able to accurately predict further developments. He also mentioned a letter of Leopold II to Louis XVI in which the emperor, according to the resolution of the Reichstag in Regensburg, demanded the restoration of property, rights and immunities of the princes of Germany harmed by the resolution of the Constituent Assembly of August 4, 1789. He, however, limited his comment only to the statement that both, aristocrats and demagogues were satisfied with an emperor's speech. Erik Bergstedt referred to that issue slightly more exhaustively. Not only did he recount the content of the emperor's letter (Austrian *chargé d'affaires* at Paris was his good friend), but he also provided it with the detailed commentary. In his opinion, *démarche* of Leopold II had made a great impression on the French public opinion since people started to doubt if he would keep neutrality in the event of the French invasion on Germany. Besides, according to Bergstedt, the people still wanted war. The ministry, however, began to think about entering into negotiations with the court of Vienna. Thus, a courier was sent to Leopold II to tell him about war preparations made by the King of France and impatiently awaited his reaction. However, vigorous armaments were not stopped. They were carried out by the Count of Narbonne enjoying the trust of all branches of the revolutionary party. In the same account, Bergstedt also wrote about a mission of the Count of Ségur who had gone to Berlin. The secretary predicted that if he was successful in the negotiations with the court of Prussia, he might become the head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as it was quite commonly believed in Paris that Delessart would not stay much longer at the current position²².

In his next message, Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein informed Gustav III that the last note of the emperor had come as a great surprise to the democrats who had realised that Leopold II would not be so favourably inclined towards them as they had long imagined. The ambassador also mentioned a conversation of Antoine Nicolas Delessart with a Prussian envoy to Paris during which Bernhard Wilhelm von der Goltz was to describe to the head of French diplomacy all the dangers which France was exposed to if it decided to attack Germany. In the opinion of the Prussian diplomat, an armed attack on the Reich was aimed to make German rulers intervene in the French internal affairs. The quoted report of Staël included also a statement that the state of war preparations in the garrisons visited by Narbonne was far better than it was expected in Paris. The morale of both, soldiers from the line troops and the National Guards, was equally good. Erik Bergstedt similarly assessed the result of an inspection trip of the Minister of War. He only

²² See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, December 22, 1791, *ibidem*; E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris, December 22, 1791, *ibidem*.

added that Narbonne took an oath from officers who swore loyalty to the king and the assembly in case it was necessary to start an offensive war. According to the Swedish diplomat, if the French considered war to be inevitable, they should attack immediately without waiting for the concentration of the troops of various German rulers. Bergstedt did not rule out, however, that a Franco-German conflict would be resolved peacefully by paying damages to the German princes harmed by the revolution²³.

On December 29, 1791 Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein informed his lord that Brissot had delivered a speech in the assembly in which he had attacked all European rulers. The leader of the Left had also attacked Gustav III in a rather sharp tone. He finally said that the seats of the Russian and Swedish missions in Paris were a hotbed of conspirators plotting against the freedom of France. Staël came to the conclusion that the purpose of the Brissotists was to break the current alliance with Austria, France and Spain and replace it with the alliance with England and Prussia. He predicted, however, that the Left would find it hard to put their intentions into action as the party dominating in the Legislative (Lameth's supporters) considered relations with Austria and Spain to be quite beneficial for the country. Exactly at the same time, Erik Bergstedt wrote that the issues in France had never been in such a critical condition as they were at that moment since the information on strengthening the cooperation between Austria and Prussia had reached Paris. It could be, therefore, expected that both courts would strongly support the demands of the German princes towards France. In connection with those reports, Bergstedt thought that the German princes from the Rhine would soon *pro forma* take certain measures against the emigrants not to give the French an excuse to invade the empire before it was ready for war. The same report included also information about an open letter of the princes and the emigrants to Louis XVI published in Paris newspapers. Moderate requests of the emigrants must have caused a real sensation in the French capital. Many observers were of the opinion that it would be possible to reach agreement with the emigrants on the basis of such prudent and moderate principles. The Swedish diplomat, however, was more sceptical. In his opinion, the reluctance of people towards all the distinctions was so great that the assembly would run into great trouble if it tried to implement any changes to the decrees on the abolition of noble titles. Referring to the internal situation in France, Bergstedt also wrote about the attempts of the government to close the mouth of the representatives of the leftist opposition. Thus, all discussion clubs were to be dismantled, which was strongly opposed by the Jacobins²⁴.

²³ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, December 25, 1791, apostille, *ibidem*; E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris, December 25, 1791, *ibidem*.

²⁴ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, December 29, 1791, apostille, *ibidem*; E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris, December 29, 1791, *ibidem*. It may be worth pointing out

At the beginning of January 1792, Erik Bergstedt wrote that due to the peaceful attitude of the emperor, who was trying to avoid war and would give the French no opportunity to start it, the Paris ministry was considering an agreement with the court of Vienna. Yet, the prospect of a peaceful end of the conflict did not arouse enthusiasm at the court. According to Bergstedt, Marie Antoinette was especially discontented with her brother's conduct. At the same time, the rumours in Paris had it that Gustav III had accepted a letter of Louis XVI with the notification of the constitution. Thus, the secretary asked his lord not to place in his response anything that could insult the assembly as it could cause the immediate sending the Swedish ambassador back to Stockholm. Just in case, Bergstedt asked for instructions how to behave if he was also requested to leave France. Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein, in turn, assured Gustav III that he maintained very good relations with Simolin. He also informed his lord about the departure of the Bishop of Autun, Talleyrand, to London; the bishop was sent to the capital of England with the task to explore the attitude of the court of St. James towards the recent events in France. Staël also wrote that both, the Legislative Assembly and Delessart aimed to force the emperor to reveal his true intentions towards France. Therefore, they sent an official note to Leopold II, asking him to stop helping the emigrants and issue a declaration on peaceful intentions of the court of Vienna towards France. The London mission of Talleyrand was also referred to by Erik Bergstedt who considered the Bishop of Autun a very good diplomat. He was convinced, however, that Talleyrand had been ordered to seek an agreement with England against Spain. The secretary's account also included information that Gaussen had written to Delessart that he had handed in a note at the court of Stockholm requesting a response of the King of Sweden to the letter of Louis XVI on the notification of the new constitution. French *chargé d'affaires* had not expected, however, a quick reply of Gustav III as he thought that the court of Sweden could use it as a pretext for official break of diplomatic relations with France²⁵.

here that in December 1791 a fierce fight broke out in the Jacobin Club between Brissot and Robespierre. This was so since the latter one was a definite opponent of war and did not agree for the ideas promoted by the deputies of the Left gathered around his opponent. See A. Mathiez, *Rewolucja...*, pp. 174–176; A. Soboul, *op. cit.*, pp. 131–132.

²⁵ See E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris January 1, 1792 (a private letter), apostille, RA, Gallica vol. 478. See also *Correspondence diplomatique du baron de Staël-Holstein et de son successeur comme chargé d'affaires le baron Brinckman. Documents inédits sur la révolution (1783–1799) recueillis aux Archives Royales de Suède* [further on: *Corr. Staël-Holstein*], L. Leouzon Le Duc (ed.), Paris 1881, pp. 243–246; E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, January 5, 1792, apostille, RA, Gallica vol. 478; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, p. 246; E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris, January 5, 1792, apostille, RA, Gallica vol. 478. It is worth adding here that under the influence of Lameth's supporters, who secretly corresponded with the emperor, Leopold II put pressure on the Elector of Trier forcing him to disperse the emigrants' cluster. The latter fulfilled

Further reports of both Paris correspondents of the King of Sweden were dominated by the issues connected with the possibility of the outbreak of the Franco-German war. Bergstedt assured Gustav III that the French army was undisciplined and the mood among the soldiers was not perfect, either. The only advantage of the French was their enthusiasm and commitment to the principles of the new constitution. According to the Secretary of the Swedish legation, the only way to avoid war was a complete capitulation of the emperor, namely his giving up the issue of the emigrants and the German princes. Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein wrote, however, that Louis Joseph, Prince of Condé, was provoking clashes with the garrison of Strasbourg to start war on the territory of the empire and thus force the emperor to defend the interests of the German princes. Yet, the ambassador had little idea of the military skills of the army of Condé since he stated that emigrants had only eight thousand people in arms and, therefore, pinned all their hopes upon the foreign intervention. When Staël was writing those words, he had already known that his long stay in France was coming to an end. On January 12, 1792 he informed Gustav III that he had just received his orders requiring him to leave Paris. The ambassador, called out from his Paris post assuring his lord on that occasion that within 15 days he would complete all the preparations to leave the French capital²⁶.

Exactly at the same time, Erik Bergstedt sent to Stockholm his own assessment of a situation of France in the international arena. He wrote that Delesart intended to pursue active foreign policy hoping, however, to maintain peace with Austria. According to Bergstedt, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs hoped that Marie Antoinette would help him to normalise relations with the court of Vienna. In the opinion of the Swedish diplomat, only a few deputies were provoking the pro-war sentiments against the emigrants and the powers supporting them. Under the influence of the insistence of the assembly controlled by the demagogues, the king decided to make a series of radical moves. However, things had not gone so far to make it impossible to turn back from the chosen path. Therefore, the French ministry decided to send a note to Vienna with a request to recognise the September constitution, give up the case of the emigrants and promise to facilitate negotiations on the compensation for the German princes who had lost their estates

his wish about which the emperor informed the French ministry in the note of December 21, 1791. Therefore, it might have suggested that the war was prevented. In the same note, however, Leopold II sustained his attitude expressed in the declaration of Pillnitz and announced that he would help the Elector of Trier if he was attacked. Brissot and his supporters deftly used the ending of the Austrian note demanding additional explanations from the court of Vienna. See A. Mathiez, *Rewolucja...*, p. 178; T.C. W. Blanning, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

²⁶ See E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris, January 8, 1792, RA, Gallica vol. 478; E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, January 12, 1792, apostille, *ibidem*.

in Alsace and Lorraine. Invoking the treaty of 1756, the emperor was also requested to prevent hostile actions of Gustav III and Catherine II against France. At that occasion, Bergstedt speculated that if the emperor refused to meet those conditions, it would inevitably result in breaking the Franco-Austrian alliance. Yet, he was not able to predict a response of the emperor who was afraid of losing Belgium and had long remained under the pressure of demands to finally act against the revolution which was detrimental to the safety of all the thrones. The Swedish diplomat quite sceptically perceived steps taken by the French to win England. In fact, he believed that the court of London wished to maintain its current neutrality and neither would it accede to the anti-French coalition nor have the alliance with France. The same report also included a significant statement that calling out both, Staël and Simolin from Paris ultimately shattered the hopes of the French ministry to avert the ongoing conflict with Sweden and Russia²⁷.

A few days later, Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein noted, with a high degree of political acumen, that the Legislative aimed at war in order to take full power in France. In his view, the proponents of the armed conflict (the Brisotists and Lafayettists) strove after the war for completely different reasons and the only thing they had in common was a desire to incite the next crisis. Staël also wrote that the troops of French emigrants were gathering in the Baden margravate, forcing the assembly to put forward a demand to the emperor to forbid the German princes to use such practices. At the same time, the ambassador emphasised the fact that the emperor wished to maintain peace and he could be forced to start the war only against his will. Noting rumours that the court would like to start negotiations with the princes through the Baron of Breteuil, Staël did not hesitate to say that it was in the best interest of Louis XVI to dispel those suspicions as quickly as possible. At the same time, Erik Bergstedt was facing other problems. Having learnt that the Chevalier de Gaussen had received the order from his court to demand a firm response to the letter of the King of France from Gustav III, he feared that the French authorities would ask him to leave Paris. At the same time, he assured his lord that he would try to remain at his post until the appropriate instructions came from Stockholm unless the French used force against him. In such a case, he wanted to leave France with Mikhail S. Novikov, the *chargé d'affaires* of the court of Russia, and arrange the further proceedings with him²⁸.

Contrary to Bergstedt's fears, the French ministry was not, however, going to demand his departure from Paris. Thus, on the following days he could uninterruptedly continue his correspondence with Gustav III. In his

²⁷ See E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris, January 12, 1792, apostille, *ibidem*.

²⁸ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, January 15, 1792, *ibidem*; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 248–249; E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris, January 15, 1792, RA, Gallica vol. 478.

subsequent messages, he informed the king that Brissot and the Jacobins, who supported him, being proponents of the agreement with England unambiguously aimed to break old alliances with France, Austria and Spain. On the other hand, the moderate (supporters of the Triumvirate) would, in turn, like to avoid war, believing that all the goals could be achieved without resorting to such a risk. In the second half of January 1792, it seemed that Lameth's supporters gained advantage in the Legislative since Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein wrote that the Legislative Assembly was beginning to oscillate towards avoiding the war. The first step to do so was to dismiss aggressive Narbonne. Already on January 22, the ambassador considered the resignation of the Minister of War to be sealed, although, in fact, Narbonne did not leave the ministry by the end of February. In the same message, Staël also wrote about the great fermentation of minds in Paris. As usual, he suspected the Duke of Orléans and the republicans of provoking riots. Yet, he did not rule out that the English and aristocrats were fuelling the discontent of the capital residents. He also considered rumours about the preparations of the king's escape made at court extremely dangerous for the peace in France. Erik Bergstedt was calmer about the problem of social upheaval since he thought that people's dissatisfaction resulted mainly from the high prices in Paris. Bergstedt also presented the case of Narbonne in another light informing Gustav III that the Minister of War had only threatened to resign after the assembly had rejected the draft concerning the possibility of recruiting National Guards to the line troops²⁹.

In his last January message, Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein informed Gustav III that Ségur's negotiations in Berlin had been unsuccessful. The French diplomat did not manage to lead to the break-off of the Prussian-Austrian alliance. As a matter of fact, Staël was convinced that all decisions in French matters were taken in Vienna with no participation of the court of Berlin. In his opinion, it was a trusted minister of Louis XVI, Louis Auguste, Baron of Breteuil, who was, in fact, controlling all the actions of the cabinets both, in the Austrian capital and in Paris. The ambassador also sent a message to Stockholm informing about the intensified rumours about a possible agreement between the Baron of Breteuil and the Count of Artois in exchange for introducing the constitution in France in the English style. Writing about the complicated competition of several groups (aristocrats, constitutionalists, republicans and the court party) on the French political scene, Staël did not fail to point out that the court party was the weakest one, secretly supporting the actions of the emigrants in Koblenz. According to the Swedish diplomat, the only solution for Louis XVI was to unequivocally

²⁹ See E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris, January 19, 1792 and the apostille to the message of January 22, 1792, RA, Gallica vol. 478. See also E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, January 22, 1792, apostille, *ibidem*; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 249–250.

support one side of the conflict. He should stand as the leader of the aristocrats or opt for a final break with them. At the same time, Erik Bergstedt informed about the growing discontent of the citizens of Paris due to the lack of colonial commodities in the shops and the intensifying rumours about the new escape of the king. The secretary did not, however, believe the rumours and was convinced that Louis XVI was sincere in his declarations of the willingness to cooperate with the constitutional party. Yet, the assembly and the municipal authorities, which had taken some steps to prevent the king from leaving Paris, did not bestow much faith upon the monarch. Bergstedt did not expect the situation in France to calm soon. In his opinion, the fermentation of minds would in fact be escalated by all political forces, each of which expected to score points for themselves. The Swedish diplomat remarked, however, that the Count of Narbonne was taking the lead of the French ministry. Yet, he was worried that the minister was striving for a war without making sure whether the major European powers would maintain neutrality in the conflict. Informing Gustav III of the failure of Ségur's negotiations in Berlin, Bergstedt also mentioned that the democratic party (the Brissotists) wanted to conclude the alliance with England. He was, however, sure that that initiative would be refused by the court of London³⁰.

On February 2, 1792 Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein sent to Stockholm his last message from Paris and shortly afterwards left the French capital. From that moment Erik Bergstedt, the *chargé d'affaires ad interim*, was the only correspondent of Gustav III. At the beginning of February, he informed the court of Stockholm that the Jacobins clearly intended to make Louis XVI either flee or abdicate. Ruining the royal authority, they wanted to precipitate the moment of establishing a republican regime. Bergstedt himself considered the Jacobins' actions to be logical and consistent since the only reason why the republicans did not dethrone the king in the autumn of 1791 was their fear of war with the emperor. In the winter of 1792, striving to crush Austria, the Jacobins no longer had to take the position of Leopold II into account. At the same time, however, Lameth's supporters, described by Bergstedt as the ministerial party, took the actions to extend the scope of the

³⁰ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, January 26, 1792, apostille, RA, Gallica vol. 478; *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, pp. 250–253 (here the full content of two Staël's letters written to the king on January 26, 1792). See also E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris, January 26, 1792, apostille No. 1 and No. 2, RA, Gallica vol. 478. At this point it is necessary to explain that after his return from an inspection trip to the fortress on the eastern border of France, Narbonne said that everything was ready for the beginning of a war. Therefore, on January 25, 1792 the assembly requested the king to demand a reply from the emperor "if he renounced treaties and conventions against sovereignty, independence and security of the French people". In other words, Leopold II was required to formally renounce the declaration of Pillnitz. See A. Mathiez, *Rewolucja...*, p. 178. See also T.C. W. Blanning, *op. cit.*, pp. 103–104.

king's powers. Thus, the Swedish diplomat believed that soon the turning point which would seal the advantage of one or the other group had to come. Bergstedt learnt from Bernhard Wilhelm von der Goltz, a representative of Prussia to Paris, that the court of Berlin would get involved in the French affairs only when the French attacked the territory of the Reich or refused to satisfy the German princes who had suffered from the revolution. According to the Swedish *chargé d'affaires*, the failure of Ségur's negotiations in Berlin was a great blow to the constitutional party and meant the end of a political career of the French diplomat. In his next message, Bergstedt wrote, in turn, that Kaunitz, acting on behalf of the emperor, demanded cancelling French war preparations and threatened that Austria would consider it hostile if Louis XVI's army invaded the German territory. Mentioning the adoption of a decree on passports (it was one of the regulations that aimed at hindering the king's escape from Paris) by the Legislative, the correspondent of Gustav III added immediately that in his opinion the French monarch would *veto* that law³¹.

On February 9, 1792 Erik Bergstedt informed the court of Stockholm that the French ministry had made another attempt to normalise the relations with Austria. François Barbé, Viscount of Marbois, appointed an envoy of France to Regensburg, had been sent to Vienna where he was to wipe out the bad impression made on the emperor and his ministers by the provocative decrees of the assembly. A peaceful attitude of the royal cabinet was, however, not understood by the public. Paris resembled a real volcano and Bergstedt increasingly feared its terrible explosion. He also wrote in the next message about a huge commotion of the Parisian public. In the opinion of the Swedish diplomat, it was escalating by both, the Jacobins and the aristocrats striving after war for completely contrary reasons. Yet, because the democratic party was much bigger than its adversaries, Bergstedt believed that it was the former one that was much more dangerous to France. He anxiously received the news that the Jacobins had begun to agitate the National Guards hoping that by winning support of that formation, they would secure themselves an advantage over the competitors. Over the next few days, a tone of Bergstedt's accounts did not change. He was still writing about a great mind fermentation, the anarchy and the escalation of the fights of the factions. All that made him believe that a horrible explosion might happen soon. At the same time, the internal unrest seemed to him as dangerous as the perspective of coming into an armed conflict with the emperor. In both cases, he expected the people to act against Louis XVI and

³¹ See E.M. Staël v. Holstein to Gustav III, Paris, February 2, 1792, *Corr. Staël-Holstein*, p. 254. See also E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris, February 2, 1792, apostille No. 1 and No. 2, RA, Gallica vol. 478; E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris, February 5, 1792, apostille No. 1, *ibidem*.

Marie Antoinette. In relation to the latter supposition, he asked his superiors if, in case of the outrage aimed at the royal couple, he should stay in Paris or leave immediately³².

Erik Bergstedt could not have even guessed that the court of Stockholm was preparing a surprise that would seriously strain his already exhausted nervous system. On February 19, 1792 Major Anders Fredrik Reuterswärd appeared in Paris announcing the arrival of Hans Axel von Fersen in the capital of France. Thus, in the obsequious postscript to the message dated February 19, 1792 Bergstedt asked Aron Isak Silfversparre to personally decode a correspondence package sent to Stockholm due to maintain an absolute secrecy. The *chargé d'affaires* wrote in his report that Fersen had ordered him to issue passports to the names of Chevalier Piper and Baron Ljung hoping to use them to leave France safely after the completion of his mission. Bergstedt, however, clearly did not like the idea and thus he asked Reuterswärd to advise Fersen against it. In return, the Paris correspondent of Gustav III offered another solution to the major. He offered to ask Delessart for a courier passport for Reuterswärd himself and his servant who would be played by Fersen. According to Bergstedt, that solution was far better than the previous one. Indeed, if the count was stopped, he would be brought to Paris and put at the disposal of the assembly what in the consequence would give time to act in his defence in the name of the King of Sweden and demand his immediate release. At the same time, Bergstedt could always say that he had been misled by Reuterswärd and had known nothing about the count's intended trip to France. However, he warned his superiors that if Fersen fell into the hands of some possessed municipal authorities, he would be undoubtedly executed without any further fuss lost and neither credentials nor any European potentates would save him from the lamppost³³.

On the last days of February 1792, Bergstedt informed Gustav III that Franz Paul von Blumendorf, the *chargé d'affaires* of Austria at Paris, had told him that the emperor did not have the slightest intention to start war so much strived after by the assembly, regardless of the cost since he would not afford a costly war not having any serious reason to start one. In that situation, everything would depend on the result of a dispute between the

³² See E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris, February 9, 1792, apostille, February 12, 1792, apostille and February 16, 1792, apostille, RA, Gallica vol. 478. On the latter message, the king's personal note: "He should stay in Paris and in case of trouble write to Count Fersen in Brussels who will pass him the current orders". See *ibidem*. As a result of that directive, the king's Secretary of State ordered Bergstedt to stay at the place and not to leave Paris under any circumstances. Only if the *chargé d'affaires* was in any danger, was he to ask Hans Axel von Fersen for appropriate instructions. See U.G. Franc to E. Bergstedt, Stockholm, March 13, 1792, RA, Huvudarkivet, Kabinettet/UD, B1B, vol. 137.

³³ See E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris, February 19, 1792, enshylla apostille, *ibidem*, Gallica vol. 478. Paris jaunt of Count Fersen is described in details further on in the chapter.

government and the Jacobins (the latter ones were compared by a Swedish diplomat to the hydra with 100 heads which was strong thanks to the support of the clubs in the provinces).

Expressing the old fear of the anarchy and a total slackness which might result from fierce party disputes, Bergstedt formulated at the same time an opinion that if only Louis XVI was a little more courageous, he could regain a large part of the former power without much effort conducting a revolution similar to the one which had been recently carried out by the Polish king and which would certainly lead to the restoration of the order and peace in the country. At the same time the reply of Leopold II to the last French note arrived in Paris about which Blumendorf informed Mikhail S. Novikov, the *chargé d'affaires* of Russia at Paris. Yet, he did not want to reveal the contents of that document to anyone. Bergstedt assumed, however, that the emperor's answer must be very moderate since the Austrian diplomat claimed that Austria would not start war if not forced to do so. Referring to the internal situation in France, Bergstedt, in turn, wrote that constant disputes of the aristocrats with the Jacobins were escalating further discontent and fermentation of minds. The democrats had openly accused the queen of maintaining relations with emigrants and the betrayal of the principles of the new constitution. Simultaneously, the people began to doubt about the sincere intentions of the court. Narbonne also began to slowly lose the former popularity. All that made Bergstedt unfold a very pessimistic vision of the future events in France³⁴.

At the beginning of March he wrote to Gustav III that each party was interpreting the last letter of Leopold II in a different way. The ministry, seeking to maintain peace, was satisfied because it gained new arguments in the conflict with the Jacobins and the republicans. The latter, however, accused the emperor of the lack of sincerity and the desire to gain time forcing the government to continue war preparations. The Swedish diplomat also drew attention to the internal conflicts in the ministry where the antagonism between Delessart and Narbonne was more and more visible. In his opinion, it was the emperor's response that turned the scales in favour of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, supporting the idea of peace. The mood of the

³⁴ See E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris, February 23, 1792, apostille and February 26, 1792, apostille, RA, Gallica vol. 478. What is worth mentioning here is the fact that the court of Vienna reacted to a demand to renounce the declaration of Pillnitz by strengthening its alliance with Prussia signed finally on February 7, 1792. On February 20, 1792 Frederick William II also announced in Paris that French troops' invasion in Germany would be regarded as *casus belli*. Both, the emperor's note and the Prussian declaration, were used by Brissot as a pretext to even more passionately propagate the idea of starting an offensive war and an unexpected attack on the territory of the Reich. See A. Mathiez, *Rewolucja...*, p. 178; N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, p. 200; T.C. W. Blanning, *op. cit.*, pp. 114–115; S. Askenazy, *Przymierze polsko-pruskie*, 3rd ed., Warszawa 1918, pp. 173–175; *Historia dyplomacji*, p. 438.

Legislative Assembly, which had just recomposed its Diplomatic Committee, was also peaceful. Bergstedt finally noticed that the attitude towards war caused a break in the Jacobin Club where Brissot and Condorcet voted for a war and establishing a republican system (“the first one in order to satisfy his ambitions, the other one for God knows what reason”) while Robespierre demanded the preservation of peace and the maintenance of the monarchy³⁵.

Meanwhile, France stood on the verge of a great political turning point. Narbonne, supported by line army generals, demanded Louis XVI to remove the Minister of the Navy, Antoine François Bertrand de Molleville, whom he accused of treason and a betrayal of his duties. The Minister of War also put pressure on the king to expel remaining in the Tuileries aristocrats. Outraged at Narbonne's audacity, Louis XVI deprived him of a ministerial post. On March 9 the Minister of War was dismissed. The king's decision caused turmoil among the Girondists. On March 10, 1792 Brissot delivered in the assembly a fierce indictment against the ardent advocate of peace, Delessart. He accused him of concealing important diplomatic acts from the Legislative failing to execute its commands and disclosing “cowardice and weakness unworthy of greatness of a free nation” in negotiations with Austria. Brissot supported Verniaud in a fiery speech and in that situation a decree prosecuting the former Minister of Foreign Affairs before the Supreme Tribunal was adopted by a large majority. Thus, Narbonne's defeat was avenged by the Brissotists and the war seemed inevitable from that moment. Lameth's supporters advised the king to resist. They encouraged him to dissolve the assembly and keep Delessart at the current position. This time, however, the king was not going to follow the guidance of his advisers from a constitutional party since, seeking at all costs the possibility to bring about an armed conflict, he was willing even to accept the prospect of entrusting the helm of the state to the Jacobins³⁶.

Commenting on the recent events, Erik Bergstedt wrote that it had been Delessart supported by the queen and Alexandre de Lameth who had led to Narbonne's resignation. The *chargé d'affaires* was also convinced that the Jacobins openly aimed to take over the executive power. Yet, they wanted to put foreign policy into the hands of a committee modelled as the one which had been managing the state finances since Necker's resignation. According to Bergstedt, the party openly promoting republican projects would be very dangerous to the royal couple if it managed to take over the power in France. Since at about the same time the news of an unexpected death of Leopold II

³⁵ See E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris, March 1, 1792, apostille and March 4, 1792, apostille, RA, Gallica vol. 478.

³⁶ See A. Mathiez, *Rewolucja...*, pp. 178–179; J. Baszkiewicz, *Ludwik XVI*, Wrocław 1983, p. 250; L. Villat, *op. cit.*, p. 132; T.C. W. Blanning, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

reached Paris, Erik Bergstedt wrote that the information caused different reactions. In his opinion, only the king sincerely regretted the death of his brother-in-law while Marie Antoinette actually harboured a huge grudge against the deceased brother and did not hide the fact that she expected more decisive actions from his successor. Although the leaders of the Jacobin party seemingly shared the joy of ordinary members of their group, in fact, they feared the aggressive disposition of Francis II. Even in the mid-March of 1792, Bergstedt was not sure what the future fate of France would look like. Writing about the Jacobins' attacks on Delessart and their demands for the appointment of a new head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs he did not settle the position which would be taken by Louis XVI. The Swedish diplomat anxiously watched a fierce battle between the Feuillants and the Jacobins concerning staffing of the ministerial posts. In his opinion, Madame de Staël, standing at the head of a group supporting Narbonne, would like to make her lover the most important minister. To do that, the ambassador's wife attempted to persuade all other ministers to resign. Bergstedt assumed, however, that the queen would do everything not to allow to impose on a king a man who had got under the absolute influence of Necker's daughter. He laid greater odds on Brissot's friend, Charles Dumouriez, suggested by the Jacobins for the position of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The quoted message of Erik Bergstedt was concluded with the information that the situation of the royal couple was becoming more and more critical each day and Paris rumoured more openly about forcing the king to choose the ministers from among the Jacobins³⁷.

The next few days brought long-awaited settlements as Louis XVI dismissed the former ministers and appointed the candidates suggested by the Jacobins in their place. On March 18, 1792 Erik Bergstedt had already written about the failure of Narbonne's party since the new Minister of Foreign Affairs, Charles Dumouriez, did not agree to entrust the count with the position of a Minister of War. Thus, Narbonne refused to enter the government in which he would not play a major role. In that situation, the Swedish diplomat considered the outbreak of war to be inevitable. Narbonne's collapse made his former supporter, Marshal Nicolas Lückner, go over to the Jacobins' side. The rumour had it in Paris that Lückner, leaving for Strasbourg,

³⁷ See E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris, March 11, 1792, apostille and March 15, 1792, apostille, RA, Gallica vol. 478. For the confirmation of Bergstedt's information about secrets of the political crisis which occurred on March 10, 1792 see R. Pétiet, *Gustave IV Adolphe et la révolution française. Relations diplomatiques de la France et de la Suède de 1792 à 1810 d'après des documents d'archives inédits*, Paris 1914, pp. 20–21. Delessart was arrested and brought to Orléans where he was imprisoned. After a couple of months, when on the order of the current Minister of Justice, Georges Danton, he was brought to Paris, he was stopped and battered by the people of the Versaille at the beginning of September 1792. See *ibidem*, p. 21.

had received the order from his new superiors to start the war with Austria under any pretext.

In his next message, Bergstedt wrote about the vigorous endeavours of the new Minister of Foreign Affairs who had sent a courier to Berlin and Vienna, demanding categorical explanations from both courts. Additionally, he was to offer German princes four-million-*livres* compensation for the estates lost in Alsace and Lorraine. Dumouriez was also an author of a great political sensation when he refused Brissot to acquaint him with the content of correspondence with a French envoy to the court of Berlin. According to the Swedish diplomat, the new minister was too independent to let the Jacobin Club tell him what to do. On the other hand, Bergstedt was convinced that without the support of the Jacobins, Dumouriez would not be able to do anything useful, especially given the fact that Louis XVI was said to have expressed his wish of the new ministers' continuing attending the meetings of that club³⁸.

On March 29, 1792 Erik Bergstedt informed Stockholm about the further changes on the French political scene. He wrote that the Jacobins were filling all the positions with their own lice. He also informed his court that a total exchange of the officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was taking place. Mentioning the fact that Dumouriez had sent to Turin the request for the confirmation of peaceful intentions of the King of Sardinia and the reduction of the number of troops stationed in Savoy, at the same time he pointed out that a French courier had also set off to the northern courts. However, Bergstedt did not know the content of the letters as he maintained absolutely no relations with the Jacobins ruling the Ministry of Foreign Affairs those days. The Swedish diplomat managed, however, to find out that a courier from Vienna had brought Kaunitz's response to the last French notes. In his opinion, the response of the court of Vienna meant a definitive break of the talks with France and, at the same time, the announcement of the imminent beginning of war³⁹. It might be assumed that in other circumstances there would not be a message that might have made a greater impression at the

³⁸ See E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris, March 18, 1792, apostille and March 22, 1792, apostille, RA, Gallica vol. 478. The new Minister of Foreign Affairs was characterised in a completely different, definitely negative way by A. Mathiez. In his opinion, Dumouriez, a former secret agent of Louis XV, a venal and discredited adventurer, was not suited to play the role of a leading statesman in the Girondists' office. However, Mathiez also had to admit that Dumouriez had cleverly gained the favour of the Jacobins, promising at the same time the king to defend him against the "rebels". In a short time, he also contributed to situation in which the Girondist press stopped attacking Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. Besides, Dumouriez, contrary to Delessart, was an ardent supporter of war and in this respect his aspirations were consistent with the king's wishes. See A. Mathiez, *Rewolucja...*, pp. 179–180. On the matter of the nomination of Dumouriez to the position of the Minister of Foreign Affairs on March 15, 1792 see also R. Pétiet, *op. cit.*, p. 22; T.C. W. Blanning, *op. cit.*, pp. 117–118.

³⁹ See E. Bergstedt to Gustav III, Paris, March 29, 1792, apostille, RA, Gallica vol. 478.

court of Stockholm. However, Bergstedt's message arrived in the Swedish capital at the time when no one treated the project of the Swedish intervention in France seriously any longer. Yet, before discussing that problem in more details, let us look at the activities of the Swedish diplomats at other European courts.

THE EFFORTS OF SWEDISH DIPLOMACY AIMED TO SIGN A SUBSIDY TREATY WITH THE COURT OF MADRID

Preparing for the intervention in France, Gustav III counted very much on the cooperation with the court of Madrid. In the autumn of 1791 it seemed that the king's hopes were not groundless. Spain, like Russia and Sweden, refused to recognise the new French constitution and requested the explanation of the situation by Louis XVI, declaring doubts as to whether the King of France could actually freely dispose himself. That position was diametrically different from the attitude of Leopold II who at almost the same time opened his harbours to the French tricolour ensign recognised neither in Stockholm nor St. Petersburg⁴⁰. The emperor's moves caused justified anxiety in the eyes of all the supporters of a crackdown on the revolution since his example could be followed by other courts in Europe. On October 24, 1791 a Swedish envoy to Madrid, Carl August Ehrensvärd, wrote to Gustav III that a representative of Prussia to the Spanish capital, Daniel Alfons von Sandoz-Rollin, made a statement that the emperor did not intend to question the declaration of Louis XVI on the new constitution and, as a result, the court of Berlin considered itself to be exempted from any previous commitments towards France. Commenting on the Prussian diplomat's statement, Ehrensvärd predicted that it could result in the recognition of the new French government by Spain what would pose a major challenge for the payment of subsidies promised to Sweden by the court of Madrid⁴¹.

Before Ehrensvärd's message reached Stockholm, Gustav III had come to almost identical conclusions as his representative to the court of Madrid. He presented his position in a detailed letter to the Swedish envoy to Spain on November 4, 1791. He wrote in it that the views of the court of Madrid

⁴⁰ See A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige och den franska revolutionen. Bidrag till kännedom om Sveriges och Frankrikes inbördes förhållande i slutet av 1700-talet*, vol. I (*Gustav III:s tid*), Stockholm 1920, p. 294; N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, pp. 143–144.

⁴¹ See C.A. Ehrensvärd to Gustav III, Escorial, October 24, 1791, apostille, RA, Hispanica vol. 33. The message reached Drottningholm on November 22, 1791. See also Z. Anusik, *Zabieg dyplomacji szwedzkiej o zawarcie traktatu sojuszniczego z dworem madryckim. Przyczynek do dziejów kontrrewolucji w latach 1791–1792*, in: *Dyplomacja. Polityka. Prawo. Księga pamiątkowa ofiarowana Profesorowi Henrykowi Kocójowi w siedemdziesiątą rocznicę urodzin*, I. Panic (ed.), Katowice 2001, p. 83.

coincided with his own and with the intentions of Catherine II. He expressed regret that Monsieur had not listened to his advice in Aachen and had not immediately proclaimed himself a regent as at present situation it would be far more difficult as intriguers had taken control over Marie Antoinette and, through her, influenced the emperor not to take any actions in the French matters. Consequently, the passiveness of the court of Vienna weakened the willingness of other powers, except for Russia and Sweden, to act. Hoping that the attitude of Catherine II would sooner or later make the emperor take actions, the king believed, however, that the Spaniards should be warned against the negative impact of the Austrian policy and forced to look at St. Petersburg more carefully than at Vienna. Condemning the weakness of Leopold II and his political procrastination, Gustav III came to the conclusion that the emperor aimed to make France dependent on him since he wanted his Ambassador to Paris to play the same role as Russian ambassadors had played in Stockholm and Warsaw for a century. The Swedish monarch predicted, however, that the emperor would be sorely disappointed since the weaknesses of France would bring benefits only to England. Considering the King of Spain to be the leader of the House of Bourbons (in his opinion the monarchy in France did not exist), Gustav III advised him to show a determined attitude towards Leopold II and cooperate in this respect with the court of Russia since if the emperor wanted to remain friends with Catherine II, he would be forced to take more vigorous actions. Convinced that it was Leopold II that was stopping Prussia from joining the anti-French league, Gustav III recommended concluding a trilateral Swedish-Spanish-Russian convention as soon as possible. In that way, he wanted to oblige Catherine II to deal with the French affairs more thoroughly. He also believed that in the future it would be necessary to drag Sardinia, Naples, Swiss cantons, the emperor (against his will) and the King of Prussia into that agreement. He suggested moving negotiations on the signing of the treaty to Stockholm where both, the Spanish envoy, Ignacio Maria del Corral y Aguirre, and the Russian ambassador, Otto Magnus von Stackelberg, were very committed to a good cause⁴².

Gustav III finally suggested that the future treaty should include the following paragraphs: 1. The guarantee of European estates of France 2. The restoration of the rights of its king 3. The use of force if other measures failed 4. Announcing a joint manifesto of the world powers in Paris and the dismissal of all the ministers from there 5. The refusal to recognise the new French flag in all harbours 6. The guarantee of the restoration of the

⁴² See Gustav III to C.A. Ehrensvärd, Stockholm, November 4, 1791 as cited in N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, pp. 230–236 (here a full content of the letter). See also O. Jägerskiöld, *Den svenska utrikespolitikens historia*, vol. II, part 2 (1721–1792), Stockholm 1957, p. 345; Z. Anusik, *op. cit.*, p. 83–84.

German princes' rights 7. Acknowledging Monsieur to be a regent or a viceroy until the release of Louis XVI. According to the king, the future treaty also had to clearly define secret paragraphs: a number of troops for operations in France, the commander-in-chief, a plan of military operations and the amount of subsidies for Sweden. Gustav III made it clear, however, that Denmark could not be a member of a future anti-French alliance. He believed that the Danes did not have any valuable forces and the forces of the Russian and Swedish fleet would be enough to ensure a success of the planned expedition. Thus, Ehrensvärd was ordered to convince Florida Blanca that Gustav III would not change his mind about that matter and would not allow the creation of a quadruple alliance between Russia, Sweden, Spain and Denmark which was a dream of the court of Madrid. The king also reminded his envoy that, according to his wish, future negotiations would be conducted in Stockholm, not in St. Petersburg. Going on to the plan of the military operations, Gustav III declared that he aimed at starting the interventions in France in August or September that year. The total decomposition of the French army promised quite good results. In the spring of the following year it would be totally different. The rebellious army would be prepared for defence and would be commanded by revolutionary generals, which would make the campaign much more difficult. However, Gustav III believed that the King of Spain should enlist 40–50 thousand soldiers in Switzerland and leave them at disposal of the French princes. Spanish and Sardinian armies should restrict themselves and demonstrate only on their borders. The demonstration from the Flemish side was to be organised by Swedish and Russian armies. All those activities should disorganise the French defence. Gustav III also predicted that one French prince would be assigned to each intervention army which would dispel people's fears of the foreign troops. Convincing Ehrensvärd that England would remain neutral to his planned actions towards France, the king did not care too much about the reports of a disarmament of Spanish naval forces since he believed that the money saved in that way would be used by other allies in their war preparations. Approving of Ehrensvärd's former efforts to obtain Spanish subsidies for Sweden, in the end Gustav III re-ordered him to vigorously continue his activities in that regard⁴³.

Not knowing the content of the king's new orders, Carl August Ehrensvärd wrote on November 10, 1791 that Count Florida Blanca assured him that Charles IV would never recognise the new French constitution. The Swedish diplomat, however, did not believe that assurance being sure

⁴³ See Gustav III to C.A. Ehrensvärd, Stockholm, November 4, 1791, N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, pp. 230–236. See also *ibidem*, pp. 146, 148–149, 179; A. Söderhjelm, *op. cit.*, p. 295; Z. Anusik, *op. cit.*, pp. 84–85.

that Spain wanted above all to safeguard peace on the French border. Cautiously accepting the statements of Florida Blanca about the Spanish willingness to conclude the alliance with Sweden and Russia, Ehrensvärd, however, encouraged Gustav III to intervene in London on behalf of the court of Madrid as it could facilitate the conclusion of the Swedish-Spanish alliance treaty designed to ensure the payment of permanent subsidies to Sweden by Charles IV.

A few days later Carl August Ehrensvärd reported from Madrid that information on a Swedish-Russian alliance eventually made the King of Spain decide not to reply to the letter of Louis XVI on the new constitution. Encouraged by the attitude of the northern courts, Charles IV also promised to support the pope in the issue of his Avignon⁴⁴. On November 24, 1791 a Swedish envoy to the capital of Spain sent a message to Stockholm that the whole Madrid was talking about the content of the memorandum of the court of Russia on taking joint action against France by the European powers. It was so since a Russian envoy, Nikolai N. Bützow (Bicov), handed a copy of the document to a Prussian envoy who gave it to the Englishman and through the latter one the memorandum fell into the hands of the French *chargé d'affaires*. In that way the revolutionary government learnt about secret efforts to create the anti-French coalition. In connection with that matter, Ehrensvärd started to put pressure on the representative of Catherine II to Madrid to kindly limit her friendly contacts with the Prussian. On November 28 Ehrensvärd finally wrote that the Spaniards once again expressed their willingness to accede to the Swedish-Russian treaty. Before it happened, however, Florida Blanca would like to know its content. The Swedish diplomat allowed himself to assume that if the Drottningholm treaty included expressions clearly directed against France, the court of Madrid might be reluctant to adopt them⁴⁵.

It was not until December 5, 1791 that the orders of Gustav III of November 4 reached Madrid. They were not particularly surprising to Carl August Ehrensvärd who wrote at that time that Spain, like Sweden, was reluctantly looking at the actions of Leopold II. Yet, it could not take more vigorous actions due to the lack of money. The Swedish diplomat predicted

⁴⁴ See C.A. Ehrensvärd to Gustav III, Madrid, November 10, 1791 and November 21, 1791, apostille, RA, Hispanica vol. 33; N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, pp. 179–181; Z. Anusik, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

⁴⁵ See C.A. Ehrensvärd to Gustav III, Madrid, November 24, 1791, apostille and November 28, 1791, apostille, RA, Hispanica vol. 33. See also N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, p. 147; Z. Anusik, *op. cit.*, pp. 85–86. The diplomats mentioned in Ehrensvärd's account are a Prussian envoy, Daniel Alfons von Sandoz-Rollin, an English ambassador, Alleyne Fitzherbert, Baron of St. Helens and Auguste Marquet de Montbreton d'Urtubise, *chargé d'affaires* of France at Madrid. See *Repertorium der diplomatischen Vertreter aller Länder* [further on: *Repertorium*], vol. III (1764–1815), O.F. Winter (ed.), Graz-Köln 1965, pp. 140, 177–178, 340.

that Florida Blanca would decide not to take any serious actions until he had at least 50 million *livres* in the treasure. Nevertheless, the court of Madrid sent a special envoy to Switzerland with the task of recruiting six thousand soldiers in the service of Charles IV. After the last conference with Florida Blanca, the Swedish envoy also came to the conclusion that the court of Madrid was ready to accede to the Swedish-Russian treaty. He was not, however, in a hurry to acknowledge the Count of Provence as the Viceroy of France as Charles IV had just recognised the tricolour flag and commanded to respect it in all the harbours. Ehrensvärd was convinced that the Spaniards would not mind it if the Swedish troops landed in Le Havre and marched on Paris. However, he expressed his concern about the attitude of the court of London wondering what the office of St. James could do when the strong Russian and Swedish fleet appeared at the shores of England⁴⁶. In the message of December 12, 1791 Ehrensvärd gave the king a favourable information that Corral had been authorised by his court to start negotiations on the alliance with Sweden. The envoy also sent Stockholm the plan of the future activities of the anti-French coalition developed by the Spanish. It provided financial support for the French emigrates and the concentration of troops of French neighbours near its borders. Yet, only Russian and Swedish troops were to be used in military actions. Other powers were to limit themselves to subsidising both, northern courts and performing the acts of sabotage on the French borders. Moreover, the Spaniards wanted powers' joint manifesto not to be directed against the common people but against tyrants, usurpers and destroyers of the monarchy. The same manifesto was to include the solemn assurance of territorial integrity of France. Explaining the position of his court, Florida Blanca said that Spain could not send their own troops against French rebels fearing that in case of war in France it could be attacked by England which it had a bitter argument with in America. Spanish plans also indicated that a role of the emperor in the future activities would be limited to stretching a military cordon along the borders of France and paying allowance to the northern courts. Moreover, the court of Madrid thought that neither Monsieur should be announced a regent nor Louis XVI should be recognised as incapable of performing his duties⁴⁷. It can be assumed here that although the plan presented by Florida Blanca to Ehrensvärd differed in many details from the projects developed at the court of Stockholm, it could be a convenient starting point for the future negotiations on signing of the alliance treaty.

⁴⁶ See C.A. Ehrensvärd to Gustav III, Madrid, December 5 and 8, 1791, RA, Hispanica vol. 33; Z. Anusik, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

⁴⁷ See C.A. Ehrensvärd to Gustav III, Madrid, December 12, 1791 and an enclosure to this message, RA, Hispanica vol. 33; Z. Anusik, *op. cit.*, pp. 86–87.

In his subsequent messages from Madrid Carl August Ehrensvärd wrote to Gustav III that Florida Blanca had expressed great a dissatisfaction with the behaviour of French emigrants who could not keep anything in secret and spread plans that should remain confidential throughout Europe. However, the court of Spain did not intend to change its actions towards Koblenz. Contrary to the hopes of Gustav III, it did not intend to approve of the idea of calling all the ambassadors away from France, convening the military congress and breaking the trade relations with France. In relation to those issues, the Spaniards were more willing to support moderate and cautious actions of the emperor than the ideas promoted by Catherine II and Gustav III. Thus, Ehrensvärd heard from Florida Blanca that Spain would not call away its representative from Paris. At the same time, however, it would still support emigrants believing that the army of the princes should play a decisive role in the future intervention. The court of Spain also believed that the invasion of foreign armies in France should be very well prepared. According to Florida Blanca, everything should be resolved during a short campaign. He was, in fact, very unwilling to start war on a great scale⁴⁸.

At the beginning of January 1792 Ehrensvärd wrote to Gustav III that despite the great recognition enjoyed by the ruler of Sweden at the court of Madrid, it would be extremely difficult to persuade the Spaniards to take more decisive action in reference to French affairs. Florida Blanca used the attitude of Austria, England and Prussia as an excuse saying openly that "Spain treats France with the same indifference as China" and the only link which it kept with it was the trade one. The Swedish envoy admitted also that in the current situation Spain was not able to act more vigorously. He assured his lord, however, that he would do all that he could to bargain subsidies for Sweden, although he considered that task extremely difficult to implement. In the following January messages, Ehrensvärd wrote that Florida Blanca was ready to accede to the Swedish-Russian alliance hoping that it would support it against England. Therefore, the Swedish diplomat took a liberty of making a malicious comment that it was mainly the fear of the English that encouraged the Spaniards to make more and more promises and seek agreement with the court of Stockholm⁴⁹. At the end of January 1792 Ehrensvärd had a long conversation with Florida Blanca on the idea of the convocation of a military congress at the French borders. He heard that it would be much better to concentrate a numerous army there as, if the army was victorious,

⁴⁸ See C.A. Ehrensvärd to Gustav III, Madrid, December 15, 1791, apostille and an enclosure to the message of December 19, 1791, RA, Hispanica vol. 33; Z. Anusik, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

⁴⁹ See C.A. Ehrensvärd to Gustav III, Madrid, January 2, 1792, apostille, January 19, 1792, apostille and January 23, 1792, *ibidem*, Hispanica vol. 34. See also N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, p. 214; Z. Anusik, *op. cit.*, pp. 88–89.

the congress would be convened within 24 hours. The Spanish politician was a strong opponent of the idea presented to him. In his opinion, the congress of the world powers would not be able to either modify the French constitution or to make any binding decision. During the conversation the issue of war preparations taken by the French Legislative Assembly was also raised. Both interlocutors believed that the attack of the revolutionaries on the immigrants would be an open violation of treaties binding France with other nations⁵⁰.

At the beginning of February 1792 the orders of Gustav III of December 30, 1791 reached Madrid. The King of Sweden told his envoy to try to make the court of Spain mediate in an agreement between the advisers of Louis XVI and the council of the princes in exile. According to the king, Charles Eugène de La Croix, Marshal of Castries, would be the best mediator in the dispute between Calonne and Breteuil. His mission, however, would be far more likely to succeed if it was supported by the Spanish diplomacy. Thus, according to the orders of Gustav III, Ehrensvärd talked with Florida Blanca on that issue. In his subsequent messages the Swedish envoy wrote that Charles IV was collecting the money promised earlier to Sweden and Florida Blanca had promised to cooperate with both, the court of Stockholm and Catherine II. In Ehrensvärd's opinion, at the end of February 1792 it seemed that the Spaniards would successfully complete negotiations on the Dutch loan and would soon be able to pass four million *livres* to Gustav III for the preparation of the expedition of his army against France. However, on February 27, 1792 Carl August Ehrensvärd sent a message to Stockholm in which he wrote that the court of Madrid seemed to be thinking about abandoning the concept of the active actions against France which, in turn, might lead to the break of his negotiations with the northern courts. At the same time, however, Ehrensvärd received an assurance from Florida Blanca that the total sum of four million francs promised before would be paid to Gustav III, regardless the fact whether the Swedish troops would set off against France or not⁵¹.

Swedish diplomat's pessimistic predictions proved right since in March 1792 a fundamental change occurred in the Spanish ministry where the place of Florida Blanca was taken by Pedro Pablo, Count of Aranda. From the very beginning, Ehrensvärd sought to win the new minister over to the concept of the Spanish accession to the Drottningholm treaty. He also submitted a project of a Swedish-Spanish subsidy convention at the court

⁵⁰ See C.A. Ehrensvärd to Gustav III, Madrid, January 30, 1792, apostille, RA, Hispanica vol. 34.

⁵¹ See C.A. Ehrensvärd to Gustav III, Madrid, February 2, 20, 23 and 27, 1792, *ibidem*. See also N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, p. 209; Z. Anusik, *op. cit.*, pp. 89–90. Money promised by the Spaniards (four million *livres*) was to be collected at the Hasselgren Bank in Amsterdam at the end of April 1792. Let us also pay attention at this point to the fact that the last of the quoted messages reached Stockholm only on March 29, 1792.

of Madrid. However, as he could see, none of his efforts brought any results⁵². On March 26, 1792 Ehrensvärd wrote to Gustav III that the news of the emperor's death made the local office decide to withdraw from the active policy towards France. According to Ehrensvärd, the court of Madrid had lost all its interest in foreign policy and the royal couple, noting the sad fate of Louis XVI and his family, lived in fear of the outbreak of a similar revolution in Spain. Informing about changes in the Spanish ministry, the Swedish envoy predicted that perhaps Aranda would be able to gain trust of the king and the queen like his predecessor but for now his main goal was to strengthen his new position. Carl August Ehrensvärd by no means belonged to the group of the supporters of the new minister since he feared that Aranda would refuse to pay four million *livres* promised to the court of Stockholm. Besides, he considered Aranda to be a too zealous supporter of democratic ideas. He also predicted that if Berlin and Vienna could somehow win Aranda, Spain could be drawn into war against its will. However, if the efforts of the German courts did not bring any results, "Spain would become zero in Europe, vegetating at the mercy of consecutive events". At the same time, the envoy urged Gustav III to demand the court of Madrid to pay back four million *livres* as a compensation for the cost of armaments taken by Sweden trusting the promises of the Catholic King⁵³. Ehrensvärd rightly feared that Spain under Aranda's rule would withdraw from its former policy. He was ready to perceive the resignation of Florida Blanca as the announcement of breaking any negotiations between the court of Stockholm and the court of Madrid. He was right since Aranda was not at all interested in Spain joining the Swedish-Russian alliance⁵⁴. Doubts and anxieties of Carl August Ehrensvärd, however, could no longer have any influence on the decisions of the court of Stockholm. His last telegram did not arrive in the capital of Sweden until April 24, 1792.

THE KOBLENZ MISSION OF CARL GUSTAF OXENSTIERNA

As previously announced, in the autumn of 1791 Gustav III decided to accredit his representative with the French princes residing in Koblenz. He chose an already experienced diplomat, Baron Carl Gustaf Oxenstierna. A descendant of an old and excellent family was born on December 30, 1753. Oxenstierna was the son of Erik Gustaf Oxenstierna and Sarah Margaret Lagerstam. After studying at the University of Uppsala he decided on a clerical career reaching in 1776 the position of the Second Secretary of the

⁵² See C.A. Ehrensvärd to Gustav III, Madrid, March 19, 1792, RA, Hispanica vol. 34. See also N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, pp. 210–212; Z. Anusik, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

⁵³ See C.A. Ehrensvärd to Gustav III, Madrid, March 26, 1792, apostille, RA, Hispanica vol. 34.

⁵⁴ See N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, p. 215; O. Jägerskiöld, *op. cit.*, p. 346.

Presidential Office. Three years later, Carl Gustaf Oxenstierna was appointed a Secretary of the Swedish mission in Dresden. From December 1785 he represented interests of Swedish Pomerania at the Imperial Diet in Regensburg. After Varennes, Gustav III entrusted Oxenstierna with a mission at the court of Bavaria and then ordered him to take over a diplomatic post alongside the brothers of Louis XVI⁵⁵.

Carl Gustaf Oxenstierna arrived in Koblenz on November 19, 1791. He started with visiting a representative of Catherine II, Count Nikolai P. Rumyantsev. They both agreed that the Swedish diplomat should first visit the Archbishop of Trier, Clement Wenceslaus Wettin, the ruler of the country where the French princes had found shelter. Oxenstierna wrote a letter to Baron Duminique, the prime minister of the electoral government, asking for an audience with the archbishop. At the same time, Oxenstierna informed the brothers of Louis XVI about his arrival, apologising for not visiting them before being received by the Elector of Trier. His arguments were accepted with a full understanding. At the same time, however, Charles, Count of Artois, wrote to the Swedish envoy that if he wanted to visit the princes without following the rules of etiquette, such a meeting could be easily arranged. The baron accepted the offer and paid a private visit to the princes. It proceeded in a very cordial atmosphere. Louis, Count of Provence spoke with appreciation about the negotiations conducted by Oxenstierna in Munich. He also showed him the letter of Louis XVI in which the King of France had urged his brothers to return to the country. Additionally, he acquainted Oxenstierna with the content of the princes' response to the king's letter. The conversation also raised the issue of freedom of Louis XVI. The king's brothers were convincing Oxenstierna that the ruler of France was not fully free and the content of the letters sent by him was imposed by force. Then, Oxenstierna paid an official visit to the Elector of Trier. He was also presented to Franz Xavier of Saxony, an elder brother of the elector, and his sister, Princess Kunegunda. On November 22, 1791 Carl Gustaf Oxenstierna again, this time officially, met with the French princes and Maria Josepha de Savoy, a wife of the Count of Provence. Monsieur assured him on that occasion that he would soon grant him an audience during which he would accept the letters of credence issued by Gustav III. Oxenstierna expected that the ceremony would take place in Schönbornlust where the princes had earlier received Count Rumyantsev⁵⁶.

On November 24, 1791 Carl Gustaf Oxenstierna wrote to Gustav III that on the previous day a message about the successful escape of Louis XVI from Paris had spread in Koblenz. It brought about the exceptional excitement among the emigrants. Oxenstierna had arranged to meet with Marshal

⁵⁵ See A. Söderhjelm, *op. cit.*, p. 300; N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, p. 144. See also *Den introducerade svenska adelns ättartavlor*, G. Elgenstierna (ed.), vol. V, Stockholm 1930, pp. 596–597.

⁵⁶ See C.G. Oxenstierna to U.G. Franc, Koblenz, November 22, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 501.

Victor François, Duke of Broglie, who was to come to the Swedish envoy at the head of the whole French nobility which number in the city and the suburbs was estimated at nearly three thousand. Good news resulted, however, in the marshal's cancelling the previously scheduled meeting through one of his aides. The author of the confusion was one of Brussels correspondents of Constantine, Count of Vergennes, a French Minister in Koblenz, who had written that the king had safely crossed the Franco-Belgian border between Valenciennes and Condé. The princes doubted a little about the truthfulness of such good news and were not willing to pass it to the elector too soon but they impatiently awaited the confirmation. The entire group was waiting at the princes' for more than five hours but no courier arrived at the city. Oxenstierna himself hesitated whether or not to send a special messenger to Stockholm but he refrained from it until the message was confirmed once again. The next morning the baron was seriously thinking about sending a relay to Hamburg, as he was beginning to believe that the king had succeeded in his escape, indeed. The princes also spent the night preparing carriages and the next day ordered all the officers stationing in the city to turn up at their place. In that situation, Oxenstierna decided to withhold his actions until another meeting with the brothers of Louis XVI. It turned out that he did the right thing as Monsieur announced to all the present that the news of the king's escape turned out to be untrue⁵⁷.

On November 25, 1791 Carl Gustaf Oxenstierna met with the Marshal of Broglie who conveyed his regards to Gustav III on its own behalf as well as all the French nobility staying in Koblenz. The consignment sent to Stockholm included both, the content of the speech given by the marshal and the envoy's response. In the same pile of letters, Oxenstierna also sent the court of Stockholm the content of his speech to the Count of Provence on the occasion of handing him a letter from Gustav III. On the same day, the envoy of the Swedish king also visited the Count of Artois and Madame, a wife of the Count of Provence. During both audiences he also gave a formal speech about which content he informed his Stockholm superiors. Thus, on November 25, 1791 Carl Gustaf, Baron of Oxenstierna officially took up duties of a representative of the King of Sweden alongside the princes of France residing in Koblenz⁵⁸.

⁵⁷ See C.G. Oxenstierna to Gustav III, Koblenz, November 24, 1791, *ibidem*.

⁵⁸ See Discours du Maréchal Duc de Broglie a la tête de la noblesse française rendu le 25 Nov. 1791 chez le Baron d'Oxenstierna Ministre de p. M. Suédoise à Coblenz; Réponse du Baron d'Oxenstierna; Discours particulier à Monsieur, Frère du Roi, en lui remettant la lettre de p. M.; À Mr le Comte d'Artois; À Madame, *ibidem*. See also N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, pp. 184–185. For more information on the situation at the court of the princes in Koblenz see J. Baszkiewicz, S. Meller, *Rewolucja francuska 1789–1794. Społeczeństwo obywatelskie*, Warszawa 1983, pp. 326–330;

One of the first things that the Swedish diplomat had to deal with was to support the efforts of Jean Baptiste de Chabannes, Marquis of Vergers, who wanted to join the Swedish service as one of the aides of Gustav III. In his first official message of December 4, 1791 Oxenstierna wrote, in turn, about actions taken by the emigrants to win as many supporters in France as possible. Those most zealous were Charles Alexandre de Calonne and the Count of Artois. Their efforts did not, in fact, bring about the expected results but people in Koblenz consoled themselves with the hope that sooner or later they would lead to a happy end. Oxenstierna also reported on a rumour that there was a secret agreement between the French royal couple and the princes. That agreement would, however, be kept in such a deep secret that even the closest confidants of the princes knew nothing about it. Despite that, the king and the queen were deeply afraid that the information about their agreement with the emigrants could leak to the public and thus provide an excellent fuel for “mad” republicans, hostile towards the royal couple. Oxenstierna quite sceptically, however, referred to the information about the agreement between the Tuileries and Koblenz perceiving it rather as a fruit of the intrigues flourishing around the French princes in exile. In the same message, the Swedish ambassador also mentioned his conversation with François Claude, Marquis of Bouillé. The latter one informed the envoy that four weeks before he had turned to Gustav III with an offer to start negotiations on taking over Braunschweig troops in Swedish service. The marquis explained that those troops were still in the service of the Dutch but, because the agreement of the Duke von Brunswick with the Republic of the United Provinces was soon to expire, Bouillé insisted on making efforts to take those troops under the command of the King of Sweden⁵⁹. At the same time the Swedish diplomat also got the access to the documents reflecting the increasing crisis in the relations between France and the Elector of Trier. The correspondence sent by the Oxenstierna to Stockholm on December 4, 1791 included copies of the note handed to the Archbishop of Trier by a French envoy, Constantine, Count of Vergennes and the elector’s response prepared by Baron Duminique⁶⁰.

in particular E. Daudet, *Histoire de l’émigration. Coblenz 1789–1793*, Paris 1890. See also J. Godechot, *La contre-révolution. Doctrine et action. 1789–1804*, Paris 1961, pp. 167–173.

⁵⁹ See C.G. Oxenstierna to Gustav III, Koblenz, December 4, 1791 (a private letter); C.G. Oxenstierna to Gustav III, Koblenz, December 4, 1791 (a report), RA, Gallica vol. 501.

⁶⁰ In a note handed to Clement Wenceslaus, Constantin, Count of Vergennes demanded on behalf of his government, “that the French gathered in his countries are forbidden” to form assemblies there, create military units or collect weapons and military materials. He also demanded the dissolution of the existing troops of French emigrants, expressing on that occasion hope that the elector would do everything he could “to avoid any incidents which could lead to straining mutual relations”. See Copie de la Note Ministerielle de Mr le Comte de Vergennes Ministre Plénipotentiaire de p. M.T.C. à la Cour Electorale de Treves, en date de Coblenz

In his new message, Carl Gustaf Oxenstierna informed the court of Stockholm that the Chevalier de Bombelles brought from St. Petersburg the letters of Catherine II to the French princes, Karl Heinrich, Prince von Nassau-Siegen, Count Nikolai P. Rumyantsev and Victor François, Marshal of Broglie. In all those letters the empress assured her correspondents of immutability of her position in the French affairs. Special kindness was shown to Monsieur whom Catherine promised all possible help and support. The empress also informed him of the signing of the Swedish-Russian treaty in which French affairs were not forgotten. At the same time, Oxenstierna received a content of Gustav III's reply to the circular letter sent out by the emperor to the European courts. In his view, the content of the reply caused sensation and admiration for Gustav III of all gathered in Koblenz. On December 14, 1791 in a letter to Ulric Gustaf Franc Oxenstierna wrote, in turn, that the Elector of Trier, threatened by French demands, had decided to send requests for help to the King of Sweden as a guarantor of the Westphalia treaty. In the same letter, the Swedish envoy for the first time took liberty of assessing the internal situation in France writing about hesitations and visible uncertainty in the actions taken by the Legislative Assembly. In his opinion, it was manifested in the "absurd, cruel and impractical" decrees passed by the Legislative then quickly cancelled and replaced by totally contrary regulations. Oxenstierna believed that "although the furious and the mad" had a large majority in the assembly, they were not able to rule effectively because of the increasing resistance of their own society. In his opinion, messages coming from France were the best confirmation of the opinion widespread in Koblenz that the French were not going to stand "the government, both chimerical in its theory and harmful in its practice" any longer. In the same letter, the envoy also informed the Secretary of State that he maintained very close and

le 18 Nov. 1791, *ibidem*. In response, Baron Duminique wrote that the King of France was not really free which makes the Elector of Trier believe that the note handed to him did not reflect the true intentions of Louis XVI. Moreover, he said that there were no assemblies of the French hostile towards France in the electoral states while those subjects of the king who resided within the boundaries of the electorate openly showed respect and affection towards their monarch. The baron also claimed that the electoral government had taken all necessary steps to ensure order among emigrants forbidding them to take any actions that could disrupt neighbourly relations between Electorate of Trier and France. Baron Duminique ended his reply to the note of the French minister as follows: "As for the emigrants' statements, perhaps they are entitled to express their dissatisfaction with the fact that at the same time there have been a series of articles unfavourable towards German rulers in the Paris newspaper. The undersigned has also received a clear order to mention, guided by neighbourly intentions towards France and to prevent its false steps, that the territory of Electorate of Trier is also the territory of the empire and that the slightest insult or violence towards it would become an object of interest of the emperor, other Reich countries, the powers-guarantors and all their allies". See Réponce de Mr le baron Duminique, Ministre dirigeant et du cabinet, en date du 20 Novembr. 1791, *ibidem*.

friendly relations with Rumyantsev who had helped him at the beginning of his mission. He was also pleased with a natural and family atmosphere at the court of the elector and in the circle of the princes. The well-being of the Swedish diplomat also resulted from the fact that all his interlocutors spoke very favourably of Gustav III who was considered in Koblenz a great leader and hero⁶¹.

On December 18, 1791 Carl Gustaf Oxenstierna wrote to his lord that on the previous day the courier from France had brought the news that the French government had decided to send 60 thousand soldiers against the princes and states of the Reich which had granted shelter to the French emigrants. The Elector of Trier immediately sent a messenger to Vienna but did not make any preparations for a possible defence. The Swedish diplomat expressed his concern about the fact that the French Jacobins, acting decidedly against the German princes and condemning the French in the Rhine, clearly seemed to save the emperor not mentioning about far more numerous gatherings of emigrants in the Austrian Netherlands. Oxenstierna doubted, however, that the French could quickly put their intentions into action. He believed that they would need at least six weeks to prepare such a large army for marching out⁶². However, he wrote in the next message from Koblenz about a complete disappearance of the spirit at the electoral court since Clement Wenceslaus had received (thankfully untrue) news that, at the request of Louis XVI, the Royal Council in France had decided to declare war against the princes. In connection with that event Oxenstierna wrote that among all the factions acting in France there was not even one which would not want a war. The enraged ones and the Jacobins were seeking war because it was their only hope for salvation. The monarchists would like the war in order to expand the prerogatives of the king and thus strengthen the new constitution while the royalists were pushing for the armed conflict because they did not believe in the outbreak of the counterrevolution which they had long been waiting for and which was heralded by 30 months of continuous looting and disorder. They strongly believed that the princes would use that opportunity and prove worthy of the trust placed in them. They hoped that the counterrevolution would be actively participated by the unfortunate and insulted French nobility who would rather gloriously die on the battlefield than lead further existence in deplorable conditions in which they currently were. Carl Gustaf Oxenstierna was convinced that the outbreak of war was inevitable. He believed, however, (as Robespierre thought!) that the rebels' leaders should think whether it was worth risking ruining all the former successes for uncertain benefits which could result from war. On the other hand,

⁶¹ See C.G. Oxenstierna to Gustav III, Koblenz, December 9, 1791, apostille; C.G. Oxenstierna to U.G. Franc, Koblenz, December 14, 1791, *ibidem*.

⁶² See C.G. Oxenstierna to Gustav III, Koblenz, December 18, 1791, *ibidem*.

he, however, drew attention to the enthusiasm of the French people and the army, seeking to declare a fight for life and death with all enemies of the revolution. He was convinced that the enthusiasm could not be ignored by the party leaders. Oxenstierna very aptly interpreted the essence of divisions in the assembly where each party tried to use the approaching conflict to strengthen its own position while seeking to weaken its political opponents. The Swedish diplomat surprisingly noted the fact that in face of impending war the princes had no plan of action naively believing that it was enough to stick to their faithful nobility and not to do anything that would throw doubt on their love for the King and devotion to the common cause. Thus, the brothers of Louis XVI decided to wait quietly for further developments assuming that the next move of their enemies would help them pave their own route. In the same message, Oxenstierna also wrote about information that the French ministry had called the Count of Vergennes away from Koblenz, yet, the count had excused himself from immediate return to Paris⁶³.

At the end of December 1791 Oxenstierna officially informed the French princes of the Swedish-Russian alliance treaty. The brothers of the King of France received the news with great joy. A great anxiety in Koblenz was, however, caused on December 26 by the arrival of the new French Minister, Louis Claude Bigot, Chevalier de Sainte-Croix, who brought with him a very harsh *démarche* in which Louis XVI demanded the removal of emigrants from the electoral countries by January 15, 1792. Bigot de Sainte-Croix began his stay in Koblenz from visiting the Count of Vergennes. The latter one, however, gave him a cold welcome considering the new envoy an outspoken Jacobin. Almost at the same time the news came to Koblenz that the Elector of Mainz, Frederick Charles von Erthal, had received the same note from the French as the Elector of Trier. In that situation, it was decided that the Elector of Trier would respond to the French *démarche* only after a consultation with the Elector of Mainz⁶⁴.

At the beginning of January 1792 Carl Gustaf Oxenstierna wrote to Gustav III that on December 27, 1791 the princes had held a conference with the elector, Baron Duminique, Rumyantsev and himself. Participants had debated on the content of the French reply to the note. Consequently, the only decision was to send a special courier to Vienna to ask the emperor for help. The Swedish diplomat also reported that the French emigrants for some time had conducted negotiations with the landgraves von Hesse-Kassel and Hesse-Darmstadt but ultimately had not obtained the permission to move to their countries. Therefore, they wrote a letter to Berlin to

⁶³ See C.G. Oxenstierna to Gustav III, Koblenz, December 25, 1791, *ibidem*.

⁶⁴ See C.G. Oxenstierna to Gustav III, Koblenz, December 28 and 30, 1791, *ibidem*. See also N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, pp. 196–197.

obtain the consent of the King of Prussia for stay in Bayreuth and Ansbach. According to Oxenstierna, Worms residents were very dissatisfied with their own municipality which forced the Prince of Condé to leave the city. The members of the municipal authorities were even accused of being bribed by the French demagogues⁶⁵. However, the situation in Koblenz did not look good, either. Karl Heinrich, Prince von Nassau-Siegen already on January 7 had gone to Vienna to see for himself the current mood of the emperor. The recruitments ordered by the Elector of Trier in Brabant and Luxembourg had not brought about the expected results since only 200–300 people were recruited who were not in any case capable of replacing a large number of experienced soldiers from among the French emigrants forced to leave the boundaries of the electorate⁶⁶. On January 16, 1792 Carl Gustaf Oxenstierna finally sent a very comprehensive report of his stay in Koblenz to Stockholm. He wrote in it that an envoy of the French Legislative Assembly had met with very little resistance from ungenerous Baron Duminique, submissive to the French demands. Thus, Sainte-Croix hurriedly announced his triumph to the assembly and immediately received a response. The King of France expressed his satisfaction with the conduct of the elector in relation to the dispersion of the assembly as well as other steps taken by him to remove any reasons for dissatisfaction of the French government. Therefore, the king ordered his generals not to take any hostile action against the electorate. He also ordered to stop all provocations towards the Elector of Trier which could be perpetrated by the municipal authorities of the cities located on the French-German border. According to Oxenstierna, the success must have led the Legislative deputies to the conclusion that an armed demonstration of the French troops was enough to paralyse the actions of all the European powers. In Koblenz it was rumoured, however, that the reason for so far-reaching concessions of the Elector of Trier was a political intrigue which roots were embedded in Brussels and which branches reached Vienna and Berlin and perhaps also St. Petersburg. The suspicions had arisen that it was the Baron of Breteuil who was directing the actions of the electoral court. That discovery worried all supporters of the princes who flattered themselves that they would achieve an immortal fame returning in glory to France and restoring the throne of the king. They also believed that through their actions they would bring about a greater significance of noblemen and restore their authority in the eyes of the people. Now, however, they all felt disappointed and cheated. They came to the conclusion that all their sacrifices had been vain and the future could bring only more suffering resulting

⁶⁵ See C.G. Oxenstierna to Gustav III, Koblenz, January 4, 1792 together with the apostille to the message, RA, Gallica vol. 501. See also N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, pp. 196–197.

⁶⁶ See C.G. Oxenstierna to Gustav III, Koblenz, January 11, 1792, RA, Gallica vol. 501.

in the total destruction of their homeland. In that situation, their only hope was the Count of Artois whose strength and firmness confirmed their belief that he would be able to stand up to every evil and would never let them down. Noting all those bitter and sorrowful statements of the emigrants, Oxenstierna claimed at the same time that all of them were full of admiration for Gustav III who was the first European ruler who had determined his position towards France. Swedish diplomat's interlocutors also expressed the opinion that the Bourbon on the throne of Sweden would not show more interest in them than his lord⁶⁷.

Praising Gustav III to the skies, Koblenz residents, however, quite commonly moaned about Leopold II. The emigrants did not want to publicly complain about the behaviour of the emperor so as not to alienate that ruler. However, a plan prepared in Vienna to restore power to Louis XVI gave rise to a general discontent since the French nobles feared that the emperor would make out a high bill for helping France and they did not feel obligated to any commitments towards the court of Vienna. Later in his report, Oxenstierna wrote that the emigrants were expecting the imminent outbreak of a counterrevolution. He believed that it was very possible. French line troops were expressing dissatisfaction with actions of their own government from which they demanded to be paid with real money. The Minister of War, Louis de Narbonne, also must have been very discontented with what he had seen during his inspection trip. Thus, he wrote to the assembly that in the event of war they should rely neither on fortresses nor the line troops or the National Guard. Oxenstierna also claimed that Narbonne had met in Metz with a group of 300 officers to whom he had delivered a speech on the situation on the Rhine. He had not forgotten about the princes, either, describing them as rebels. However, it had not caused the applause of the gathered but on the contrary – their whistles. Also soldiers from the frontier garrisons had given the minister a cold reception. According to Oxenstierna, General Marie Joseph de La Fayette was, in turn, frightened of the level of the discipline in the volunteers' troops. Therefore, he suggested that those armed townspeople should get accustomed to military life forming battalions that would share barracks with the line troops. They replied to him with a brutal frankness that citizens, having wives and good beds with them, would not sleep with corporals. Also, La Fayette was to be very astonished by the cold reception of his speeches which he delivered to the line troops and the volunteers. Nowhere, in fact, did he hear even a single cry: "Long live the nation!"⁶⁸.

⁶⁷ See C.G. Oxenstierna to Gustav III, Koblenz, January 16, 1792 (rlation), *ibidem*.

⁶⁸ See *ibidem*.

All those observations led Oxenstierna to the conclusion that the attack on France could bring emigrants a quick success as the people would be frightened and thus welcome their liberators with joy. Especially Alsace and Lorraine were awaiting them with the greatest impatience. According to the Swedish diplomat, the only supporters of the new order in France were those who feared punishment for their crimes, those who had taken the lucrative offices, those who had gained national goods as well as a great number of robbers and thieves who lived from looting or secret funds received from those in favour of whom they acted. But the healthy part of the nation, i.e. all owners, expected the change in the current order of things. Thus, Oxenstierna predicted that the counterrevolution would be very easy to carry out. He suggested, however, causing the movement of the troops from the Spanish side of the Pyrenees in order to make the rebels move their attention in that direction. He also claimed that the diversion of Sardinian troops from the side of Nice would do a lot of good. He believed that the appearance of the significant forces on the Rhine, Moselle and Meuse would cause a widespread consternation leading to a mass desertion of soldiers from line regiments and voluntary battalions. The next step expected by the Swedish diplomat was the occupation of Paris and dispersal of the Legislative Assembly. Oxenstierna emphasised the fact that the emigrants from Koblenz craved for revenge for the insults and humiliation which they had suffered. The dispersion of the guard and other princes' troops had led to the situation in which a significant part of the noble emigrants lost the former source of income. For the time being, all their anger turned, however, against the Chevalier de Sainte-Croix whom they regarded as the main perpetrator of their misfortunes. As a matter of fact, the intentions of the Legislative envoy were visible to the naked eye. According to Oxenstierna, he wanted to bring about the situation in which the nobles would have no choice but to return to France. It was even said that Monsieur would not hesitate to return to the country if it was not for a clear refusal of the Count of Artois who discouraged his brother from doing so. The same report included also information that the regency of Freiburg asked Cardinal Louis René de Rohan to dissolve the armed troops of the French emigrants. In Koblenz the answer of the cardinal was not known yet but it was believed that the regency had no power to take such steps. At the end of his report, Carl Gustaf Oxenstierna wrote about the adventure of the Prince of Condé. During the prince's stay in one of the German towns, at night a fire broke out in two bourgeois houses. Almost immediately, the whole nobility and all the officers gathered around the prince. A black legion commanded by André, Viscount of Mirabeau, roused from his first sleep, within four minutes stood under arms on horseback in full combat readiness. The fire was extinguished by the French themselves and the

Prince of Condé did not fail to praise the viscount for the excellent training of his soldiers whom he also rewarded with a special money prize⁶⁹.

On January 20, 1792 Oxenstierna sent another report from Koblenz. He wrote about improving health of recently ailing the Elector of Trier. He also mentioned the scatter of the guard of the French princes (consisting of 1,2 thousand soldiers). Still, the guards were placed in such a way that if necessary they could be gathered as soon as possible. According to the Swedish diplomat, Baron Duminique was on his way to destroy himself in the eyes of the emigrants and render a service of the estates of Trier preparing a petition to the elector with a request to remove the French from the territory of the electorate. The meetings of the estates were indeed extremely turbulent since Baron Duminique was openly accused of selling himself to the emigrants. Oxenstierna admitted that the minister had provided in the past many services to French princes. From the moment of the Chevalier's de Sainte-Croix arrival, he had changed, however, his behaviour which by no means led to calming infuriated minds. In the same report, Oxenstierna also included information that the princes had received an offer of admitting in their service three Illyrian regiments (five thousand soldiers) who had previously served in the emperor's army. In his view, the offer came at perfect moment because the French had not given up the intention of attacking the Electorate of Trier. Oxenstierna came to believe that the Parisian demagogues had been surprised with the elector's concessions to the demands presented to him by Bigot de Sainte-Croix who had been sent just to get a pretext to invade the lands of electoral. In the message written the next day Carl Gustaf Oxenstierna informed Gustav III that Leopold II had dismissed his sister, Archduchess Maria Christina, from the position of the Governor of the Austrian Netherlands and entrusted his son, Archduke Charles, and the Council, which was added to help him, with the administration of the country and the command of the army. That decision meant that François, Count of Mercy-Argenteau was turned away from all the influence on the Austrian Netherlands affairs. In the same correspondence Oxenstierna also sent to Stockholm a copy of a subsequent note handed to the Elector of Trier by the French envoy on December 30, 1791⁷⁰.

On January 21, 1792 Carl Gustaf Oxenstierna also prepared a detailed "Relation particulière au Roi". He wrote that the brothers of the King

⁶⁹ See *ibidem*.

⁷⁰ See C.G. Oxenstierna to Gustav III, Koblenz, January 20, 1792 (rédaction); C.G. Oxenstierna to Gustav III, Koblenz, January 21, 1792, apostille, *ibidem*. See also Copie de la note de son Excellence M. Bigot de St. Croix Ministre plénipotentiaire de Sa Majesté très chrétienne remise à son Excellence M. le Ministre dirigeant d'État et de cabinet Baron de Duminique le 30 Decembre 1791, *ibidem*.

of France were extremely grateful to Gustav III for his current policy since they owed their political existence to Sweden and Russia. They also appreciated the fact that the Swedish king and the Russian empress supported them with no hidden prospects and they certainly would not leave them at the decisive moment. Oxenstierna believed that all that authorised the court of Stockholm to take decisive steps interfering with the conduct of Louis XVI's brothers. He was convinced that the princes themselves would never cope with the problems of their courts. They did not see any harmful consequences of the divergence between opinions and the lack of discretion in their council, abuse of their great kindness by people from their circle and their habit of yielding to suggestions of people who had never had to deal with political issues. According to Oxenstierna, healing the relations in Koblenz would be an extremely difficult task, "as evil has developed deep roots at the royal court". Therefore, he decided to refer directly to Gustav III presenting "frankly and bluntly" both, the situation at the court of Koblenz and a recovery programme proposed by him. What Oxenstierna considered to be the greatest evil of that court was the poor environment of the princes consisting of "scheming, corrupt and rotten" women and "young comedians, both, ignorant and limited". In his opinion, all those who were holding on to the Count of Provence were common, prone to intrigue and lacked character. Monsieur himself stood out through a perfect natural mind, he did not lack culture, could reason clearly, had an excellent memory which allowed him to make good use of everything he had ever heard or read, he finally had the ability to develop accurate judgment about people. Despite that, however, he could not choose a suitable co-workers. At his whole "despicable court" Oxenstierna saw only a few honest and well-minded people. Those were primarily François, Count of Cossé, the first gentleman of the Chamber and Charles, Count of Damas, Captain of the Guard. They had, however, no influence on the most important decisions taken by the Count of Provence. When Oxenstierna thought what the Count of Artois should be, what he could be and what he was not, tears welled up in his eye since the count was not a liberator of France. He was not a restorer of the monarchy. Finally, he was not a hero surrounded by an aura of victories, yet, he was the last hope of the French. He, however, counted mainly on the support of foreign courts and thus did not seek popularity among his own countrymen, making fun of loyal subjects of the king, his brother. Oxenstierna hoped, however, that the Count of Artois would finally regain his sight and be able to repair the bulk of his errors⁷¹.

⁷¹ See C.G. Oxenstierna to Gustav III, Koblenz, January 21, 1792 (*relation particulière au Roi*), *ibidem*.

According to the Swedish diplomat, the circle of the Count of Artois was not much better than the circle of his brother since the most important women in his court, including the count's mistress, Madame de Polastron, did not differ much from the others. The only advantage of the Countess of Polastron was that she did not interfere in the intrigues. Yet, the tune in her circles was called by her cousin, Madame de Poulpris, and two madams de Monteau (a mother and a daughter) who had disastrous impact on the mistress. However, since the immorality of Madame de Polastron was incomparable to the immorality of Monsieur's mistress, the Countess of Balbi, the former managed to avoid a significant condemnation by the public opinion. Nevertheless, Oxenstierna considered all the described women (with the exception of the Countess of Polastron) to be very dangerous to the Count of Artois. Writing about the princes' circles, the Swedish diplomat did not hesitate to use a statement that since his arrival in Koblenz scoundrels and careerists had been limiting the access to the brothers of Louis XVI of all honest people who would be ready to sacrifice their lives in their service and shed blood for them. He was not afraid, at the same time, that someone might accuse him of casting aspersions on brave noblemen from the princely court since he claimed that only a person who did not know the French at all would not know that their bravery verged on pettiness and greatness with nothingness which, by the way, was also noticed by the local public opinion disposed definitely unfavourably towards the princes' circles. After all those disquisitions, pointing to an obvious interest of the princes, Oxenstierna suggested that Gustav III should demand the removal of the most harmful individuals from the court. Neither did he fail to draw attention to a difficult financial situation of the court of Koblenz since the princes paid 80 *livres* a month to their cavalry and 45 *livres* to foot soldiers. Those were small sums but no one thought about leaving the service "with nothing better to do". Actually, the nobility had ensured the princes many times that they would serve them even for free and were willing to sacrifice their lives for the triumph of the good cause. Yet, the growing discouragement among the princes' troops could be noticed recently which, however, was carefully hidden from the brothers of the French king. The reason for the discontent was a continuous deterioration of material existence conditions of both, the courtiers and the army. In fact, the emigrants lived on a credit which sources were gradually drying up and recent troubles of the unfortunate princes had led to a complete ruin of many companions of their misery. The Swedish diplomat was convinced that the princes were following very insouciant financial policy and suspected them of frittering Russian subsidies away. Admittedly, he acknowledged that much money had been spent on the formation of military units. And they were legitimate expenses. He assumed, however, that large

sums had been also spent on secret gifts for mistresses and favourites. Thus, the situation of the princes would be tragic if it was not for the subsidies paid to them by the Neapolitan court. Also in that case, however, numerous abuses were carried out. It was rumoured, in fact, that Calonne himself seized 300 thousand *livres* from the Neapolitan subsidy and spent the sum on his own needs⁷².

In Oxenstierna's opinion, the council of princes consisted of people without any talent and, in addition, at variance with one another. The confidentiality of sessions was not observed and indiscretion of council members was downright scandalous. Even the most secret resolutions were made public. To have an access to them it was enough to be on intimate terms with Madame de Balbi or the Count of Jaucourt. Oxenstierna believed that the situation in this regard would be bad as long as the princes did not dismiss all the authors of useless cabala and intrigues. Otherwise, the princes' efforts to deserve esteem and recognition of foreign courts and to regain confidence of the Tuileries would be futile. Oxenstierna suggested that healing relations at court should start from getting rid of all the women from Koblenz. Madame's departure was supposed to be the first step towards that goal. Knowing her well, the Swedish diplomat was convinced that she would not object to it, all the more so as she lived in Koblenz in total isolation. In that situation it would be enough to persuade the Countess of Provence to go to Turin to visit her father. Madame's departure would, however, be associated with an irrevocable decision that all the women staying in Koblenz would leave the court with her. Oxenstierna believed that it would be a really big favour done to the princes. Still, he was also convinced that only Gustav III and Catherine II could make the brothers of Louis XVI accept such a solution if only they expressed their demands in a determined and resolute way. He hoped at the same time that the deplorable state of finances, the necessity of starting war preparations and a clearly expressed will of the two most faithful allies would convince the princes that the painful operation had to be carried out. Oxenstierna also argued that separating the princes from women from their circles was *a sine qua non* for them to take any effective military or political actions. He also advised Gustav III to cause the dismissal of the Count of Jaucourt, despised by all the honest people at the court, from the council of princes under any pretext. At the same time, Oxenstierna drew attention to the fact that Count Rumyantsev remained on very familiar terms with both, the Chevalier de Jaucourt and Madame de Balbi. He considered the fact that the Russian minister was disposing the empress favourably to both those people very dangerous to the cause of the princes. In the next part of his memorandum, Oxenstierna wrote that after

⁷² See *ibidem*.

the dismissal of Jaucourt from the council, it would be wise to strengthen the position of the Baron of Flachslanden and the Chevalier de Calonne making them reach an agreement and urging them to cooperate. He also raised the issue, which was shocking for him, of a removal of the secretary of the Count of Artois from the court. In his opinion, Madame de Balbi and the Chevalier de Jaucourt used Monsieur as a tool for their cheap intrigue which aim was to get rid of the honest man devoted to his master from the princes' circle and to deepen an isolation of the Count of Artois at court⁷³.

Since Jean François, Baron of Flachslanden closely cooperated in the above-mentioned plot with the Countess of Balbi, Oxenstierna wrote a letter to him, vehemently defending the secretary of the Count of Artois, Mr Christin. Since this was the first request of that kind, he expected a positive response. He did, however, receive a response of a totally different content. The baron played down the matter and explained that Christin had been dismissed for quite prosaic reasons as he had fallen into a disfavour of Monsieur who had never valued him. Moreover, he was accused of indiscretion and inability to occupy the position which he had been holding. In connection with that matter, Oxenstierna put forward a supposition that exactly the same accusations would be used by Flachslanden if he wanted to remove Mr de Calonne from the court. In that situation, the Swedish diplomat began to doubt about the possibility of bringing the two men to an agreement. He said, however, that if the King of Sweden and the Empress of Russia vigorously supported the actions of their envoys to Koblenz and if it was possible to get rid of unnecessary and harmful people from the court, the biggest obstacle to an agreement between the two brightest advisers of the princes would be removed in that way. Finishing the story of the intrigue aimed at the secretary of the Count of Artois, Oxenstierna wrote further that on the day after sending his letter to Flachslanden the matter was discussed by the council. Calonne, Bishop of Arras and Joseph Hyacinthe, Count of Vaudreuil spoke in his favour. Ultimately, however, poor Christin was sent to England under the pretext of opposing the machinations of the Bishop of Autun who

⁷³ See *ibidem*. It is worth mentioning here that the "Count of Jaucourt", mentioned in Oxenstierna's report, under no circumstances could be identified with Arnail François, Marquis of Jaucourt (1757–1852), an ardent supporter of the constitutional monarchy and a member of the Legislative since the latter one, giving back the mandate (under the influence of the family in exile) on July 30, 1792, at the beginning of August was arrested on the order of the Paris Commune. Released from prison on September 1, 1792 (as a result of an intervention of Anne Louise Germaine Staël von Holstein), left France joining the camp of emigrants. For the incorrect opinions on the issue see J. Baszkiewicz, S. Meller, *op. cit.*, p. 327; J. Godechot, *op. cit.*, p. 169. In my opinion, the "Count of Jaucourt" from Oxenstierna's report is a father of Marquise – Louis Philippe Antoine (1726–1813). It is also worth paying attention to the fact that in the princes' circle there was also Charles Leopold de Jaucourt (1736–1799) called the "Chevalier de Jaucourt" by Oxenstierna.

was sent there by the French government. Christin nobly refused to accept the salary offered to him. At the end of the account, Oxenstierna stated that if the king wanted to accept his suggestions, then he would advise him to act quickly because there was not a moment to lose. Mentioning his correspondence with Fersen, the envoy to Koblenz also assured Gustav III that all his actions were intended to combine the interests of the princes with the interests of the French royal couple. Finally, he recommended the close cooperation between the two northern courts with Mr de Calonne who he perceived as a man of a great heart, endowed with uncommon intelligence and imagination⁷⁴.

In the message of February 5, 1792 Carl Gustaf Oxenstierna by no means changed the tone of his accounts. Again, he wrote that cabala and intrigues were flourishing at the royal court. A perpetrator of all evil was Madame de Balbi who interfered in politics without worrying about the criticism from the public. In recent times, the countess began to ask for a dismissal of the next fronts of the Count of Artois from the court. Just like in Christin's case, the count did not accept the fight and wanting to avoid breaking with his elder brother (Oxenstierna did believe in such eventuality) he decided to resign from services of several of his courtiers. The Swedish diplomat wondered, however, how long the Count of Artois wanted to sacrifice his courtiers for brash and mindless whims of a woman both, despised and hated by the public. He did not doubt that the count would finally lose patience and decide to take some dramatic steps suppressed so far by his innate goodness and nobility. In Oxenstierna's opinion, Charles Alexandre de Calonne, the closest adviser to the Count of Artois seemed to be a bit disappointed with another concession of his master leading to the weakening of the position of his friends against the circles of Monsieur. In the same message, the Swedish diplomat wrote that it was believed in Koblenz that the emperor clearly intended to remove the princes and French emigrants from any form of participation in the counterrevolution, weaken and disperse the princes' party and force the princes to leave the lands of the Elector of Trier. Therefore, efforts were made to make the Empress of Russia persuade the King of Prussia to give them shelter in Cleve. However, if negotiations with the court of Berlin ended in failure, there was the possibility that the princes could go to Spain. At the end of his account, Oxenstierna also mentioned constantly deepening financial problems of the court of Koblenz. The princes demanded payment of several million *livres* and expected to receive the money from the King of Naples. The envoy of Gustav III assumed, however,

⁷⁴ See C.G. Oxenstierna to Gustav III, Koblenz, January 21, 1792 (*relation particulière au Roi*), RA, Gallica vol. 501. Very concise summary of this account is also printed by N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, pp. 186–187.

that if the princes did not receive Neapolitan subsidy on time, their situation would be completely disastrous⁷⁵.

On February 20, 1792 Carl Gustaf Oxenstierna sent to Stockholm a copy of the message that he had sent the previous day by a courier to Curt von Stedingk in St. Petersburg. He informed the ambassador in it that Charles Alexandre de Calonne had sent his brother, Father Jacques de Calonne, on a diplomatic mission to the capital of Russia. The task of the priest was to persuade Count Valentin Esterhazy, a current envoy of the princes alongside Catherine II, to leave. Calonne also ordered his brother to find out whether the empress would not be willing to accept his candidature for the position of a new representative of the court of Koblenz to St. Petersburg. Oxenstierna believed, however, that Esterhazy would remain at the court of Russia and if he decided to leave, his successor would not be Father de Calonne but a Knight of Malta, Bailiff Jean Baptiste de Flachslanden, the baron's brother, a member of the council of princes, a wise and moderate man. In the same letter, Oxenstierna informed Stedingk that the war agitation continued in Paris and the Jacobins each day delivered offensive speeches aimed at Gustav III. He finally mentioned the plot coined by the Baron of Breteuil and Hans Axel von Fersen. According to his information, the idea of two counsellors of the Tuileries court consisted in giving Marc Marie, Marquis of Bombelles, a diplomat tied with Breteuil and the French royal couple, a decisive advantage at the court of St. Petersburg by removing a representative of the brothers of Louis XVI from there. To do it Fersen wrote a letter to his old friend, Esterhazy, convincing him that the interest of the French queen required him to consider his mission in the Russian capital finished and leave St. Petersburg as soon as possible⁷⁶.

At the end of February 1792 Oxenstierna informed Gustav III that it was rumoured in Koblenz that the Count of Artois with Calonne were preparing a new escape of Louis XVI from Paris. The Swedish diplomat was trying to learn more about the case but this time he could not penetrate the secrets of the court of Koblenz. He had learned, however, that the princes had received an unexpected financial injection (500 thousand *livres*) from an unknown source and the emperor had decided to provide them with a guarantee of a repayment of their loans to the amount of two million *livres*. The Swedish diplomat also wrote that actions had finally been taken in Koblenz to develop a plan for a future campaign which was the task of the Marshal of Broglie before his departure to Turin. Mentioning the commotion and great fermentation of minds in Paris, Oxenstierna noted, however, that in his

⁷⁵ See C.G. Oxenstierna to Gustav III, Koblenz, February 5, 1792, RA, Gallica vol. 501.

⁷⁶ See C.G. Oxenstierna to Gustav III, Koblenz, February 20, 1792, (apostille envoyée au Baron de Stedingk par le courier qui doit partir de Coblenz le 19 février), *ibidem*.

opinion, the situation in the capital of France was so stable that the lives of Louis XVI and his family were by no means endangered.

The quoted Oxenstierna's accounts included also the information about the arrival of the old Prince of Condé with the Duke of Bourbon and the Duke of Enghien in Koblenz on February 22, 1792. The representatives of the younger branch of the Bourbons did not intend, however, to remain in the lands of the Elector of Trier for a longer time since the Prince of Condé decided that he, together with his son and grandson, would stay in Bitchen, a village between Worms and Darmstadt in the territory of the Archbishop of Mainz. In Koblenz it was also rumoured that emigrants' troops stationing so far in the bishopric of Strasbourg would soon be transferred to the Bergstrasse on the lands of the Elector of Mainz, near Palatine borders⁷⁷.

At the turn of February and March 1792 Carl Gustaf Oxenstierna wrote, in turn, to Gustav III that the members of the council of princes went on missions to various European courts. Louis Conzié, Bishop of Arras and the Marshal of Broglie had already left Koblenz while recently Joseph Hyacinthe, Count of Vaudreuil had gone to Vienna and Charles de Calonne to Cologne. The Swedish envoy also wrote that on the French border an increased movement of French troops had been noticed; the troops were setting up storehouses and clearly preparing for commencement of military operations. Oxenstierna had also learnt that Marshal Lückner had been recalled to Paris, passing the commandership in Metz to La Fayette. Tracing the thread of the Cologne mission of Calonne, the envoy of Gustav III stated that he had gone to that city formally in order to apply for a new loan.

In fact, he was going to agree with Charles Eugène, Marquis of Castries on the ways of communication with the Tuileries without mediation of the Baron of Breteuil. The latter one had fallen into disfavour with the princes sending Marc Marie, Marquis of Bombelles to St. Petersburg and Victor Louis, Viscount of Caraman to Berlin on secret diplomatic missions. According to Oxenstierna, the princes were also conducting heated negotiations with the court of Berlin trying to agree on terms of a possible cooperation against France (negotiations that the Viscount of Caraman reportedly tried to stop). The King of Prussia, however, did not give brothers of Louis XVI an unequivocally positive response so far⁷⁸.

On March 9, 1792 Carl Gustaf Oxenstierna informed Gustav III that information about the death of the emperor had reached Koblenz. He lamented for a terrible situation of the empire which at such a critical point had no leader or devised means of defence. He, however, came to the conclusion that the policy of the Austrian court towards France should soon change which

⁷⁷ See C.G. Oxenstierna to Gustav III, Koblenz, February 24 and 27, 1792, *ibidem*.

⁷⁸ See C.G. Oxenstierna to Gustav III, Koblenz, February 29 and March 4, 1792, *ibidem*.

should be tangibly beneficial to Russia and Sweden. Oxenstierna also predicted that the court of Stockholm, being one of the states of the Reich and the guarantor of the treaty of Westphalia, would soon face a chance of playing a very significant role in German affairs. He also suggested that Gustav III should try to approach Prussia at which Catherine II clearly seemed to aim as well. According to the Swedish diplomat, after the emperor's death the Prussian-Austrian peace treaty, signed conclusively in Berlin on February 7, 1792, required renewal and amendment which, in turn, could even lead to its cancellation. If, however, it happened, it would be a lot easier for Russia and Sweden to force through their plan of saving France⁷⁹. However, only two days later Oxenstierna seemed distressed and depressed about all that had happened at the court of Koblenz where intrigues and cabala were flourishing like always. Charles Alexandre de Calonne, considered by the Swedish diplomat to be the best adviser of the princes, was reportedly beginning to feel discouraged by the difficulties piling up in front of him since joined cliques of the Count of Jaucourt and the Countess of Balbi were acting against him greatly influencing Monsieur who was submissive to them. Calonne was accused of all political failures, the loss of confidence of the French in the princes and bringing about the loss of their credibility at all the courts. Nor were Charles de Calonne's actions facilitated by the Baron of Breteuil who attempted to reconcile the King and the Queen of France with the princes' camp, sending Charles Antoine, Baron of Vioménil, to Schönbornlust and appointing the Marshal of Castries as an intermediary in the difficult negotiations between the Tuileries and Koblenz. At the same time Breteuil tried, however, contrary to Calonne's opinion, to force the princes to make the decision to recall Count Esterhazy from St. Petersburg. He also obstructed the actions of princes' diplomats at other European courts. The Swedish envoy informed his lord on that occasion that some time before Count Fersen had sent him a message that the King and the Queen of France had decided to personally write to the courts in Stockholm, St. Petersburg, Berlin and Madrid to force the ministers of those courts accredited alongside the princes to make the princes act in line with the suggestions of the Tuileries and a trusted minister, Louis Auguste, Baron of Breteuil. In the same message, Oxenstierna wrote that the King of Prussia had agreed to receive one thousand unarmed French noblemen in his state in Westphalia. In his opinion, it did not solve a problem of the noble refugees from France to the slightest degree; their number in Germany was estimated at 12–13 thousand people. At the same time, André Jean de Chaumontel showed Oxenstierna a project of landing of Swedish troops in Normandy. However, since the project was known to at least nine people in Koblenz, the envoy feared that the emigrants would

⁷⁹ See C.G. Oxenstierna to Gustav III, Koblenz, March 9, 1792, apostille, *ibidem*.

not be able to keep it a secret which was strictly demanded by the Marquis of Bouillé who was preparing the plans for future campaigns on the order of Gustav III. Mentioning another departure of the Bishop of Arras from Koblenz, Oxenstierna stated that the latter one, being until recently one of the most trusted advisers of the princes, had told him that he did not expect to go back to that city. Louis Conzié also told the Swedish envoy that the princes were only occupied with preparing various edicts and proclamations which they intended to publish after they encroached on France, not thinking at all about taking any military preparations⁸⁰.

In his last messages written in March 1792 Oxenstierna informed the court of Stockholm that Charles de Calonne had begun negotiations with William IX, Landgrave von Hesse-Kassel, intending to induce him to give 15–16 thousand Hessian soldiers at the disposal of the princes. Therefore, a special courier was sent to St. Petersburg to ask the empress for help in those negotiations. Oxenstierna doubted, however, if those negotiations would be successful since Rumyantsev was supposed to be against granting Russian financial guarantees to the landgrave and the princes again had got into a financial trouble as after the emperor's death they could not count on the promised two million *livres* any more. For that reason, probably, the production of counterfeit assignats began in Koblenz. The only positive news, from Oxenstierna's point of view, was information that a decision about Madame's departure had been finally taken in Koblenz; she was to go to Turin to father's court. Apparently, the King of Sardinia had expressed the wish that she came alone, without any ladies of her court. Nevertheless, the princes decided that the Countess of Provence would be accompanied by the Duchess of Caylus and the Countesses of Balbi and Moleard while François Artus, Count of Cossé, the first gentleman of Monsieur's chamber, would accompany all those women to the capital of Sardinia. In the postscript to his last March message Oxenstierna reported that the Jacobins in Paris had decided to denounce the queen accusing her of acting against the state and the nation and the Marquis of Condorcet was ordered to edit an appropriate request which was to be presented to the Legislative Assembly. It had apparently aroused the spirit and courage of a few honest men one of whom came to Condorcet and told him that within the 24 hours after the condemnation of the queen by the assembly he would be killed and that more than 100 people were willing to participate in that undertaking. The same message included a statement that the Parisian correspondents of the emigrants had reported the increasing "tyranny of these monsters (in this way Oxenstierna defined the Jacobins) which should be opposed in a determined and

⁸⁰ See C.G. Oxenstierna to Gustav III, Koblenz, March 11, 1792, *ibidem*.

resolute way”⁸¹. It should be thought that both, Gustav III and most of his advisers would agree with those opinions since it was necessary to convince any of political friends of the king about the need for a battle with the French democrats. All in all, however, the messages of Carl Gustaf Oxenstierna from Koblenz made Gustav III, who had long been looking suspiciously at the actions of the French princes, in early 1792 take an acute dislike to them and no longer regard them as major participants in the game to restore the old order in France⁸². It was certainly Hans Axel von Fersen who was the most satisfied with such a development as he had sought to discredit the brothers of Louis XVI in the eyes of his lord for a long time. Unfortunately for him, however, when he finally managed to achieve that goal, there was not the slightest chance for it to bring any tangible benefits to the French royal couple.

IN THE SERVICE OF HEART AND HEAD: THE BRUSSELS MISSION OF HANS AXEL VON FERSEN

Hans Axel von Fersen returned to Brussels on October 7, 1791. He was going to follow the development of the situation in France from the capital of Brabant while remaining in close contact with the French royal couple. The main purpose of his mission (Fersen had received a formal nomination as a Plenipotentiary Minister in Brussels from Gustav III), however, was drawing the court of Vienna into an active participation in the restoration of the *ancien régime* in France⁸³. However, it was not an easy task. Already on October 18, 1791 Hans Axel von Fersen had written to Gustav III that the emperor lapped up Louis XVI's sanction of the constitution. Thus, the count came to believe that the only thing which could be obtained from Leopold II was persuading him to agree to immediately convene a congress of the powers with the focus on France. He also believed that it should be convened under the pretext of a seizure of Avignon by the French and, therefore, he suggested convincing the pope of the necessity to appeal for the help of all the powers against that usurpation. Since Fersen doubted if the emperor would do anything without the pressure from other powers, he allowed himself to write to Ehrensvärd and Carisien asking them to make the courts of Madrid and Berlin take actions in that case. Forcing the concept of a congress, Fersen also tried to convince Gustav III that the easiest

⁸¹ See C.G. Oxenstierna to Gustav III, Koblenz, March 16 and 25, 1792 and the apostille to the last message, *ibidem*.

⁸² See N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, pp. 186, 188.

⁸³ See *ibidem*, pp. 166–168; Z. Anusik, *Kongres zbrojny u granic Francji. Niespełniona nadzieja kontrrewolucji spod znaku Tuileriów w latach 1791–1792*, „Przegląd Nauk Historycznych” 2003, vol. II, No. 2 (4), p. 144.

way to resolve the French issue would be recalling all the ambassadors from Paris and gathering them on the French border where they could immediately begin their deliberations. In the same message, Fersen also wrote that, returning from Berlin to Paris, the Count of Moustier had met in Brussels with the Baron of Breteuil. Assuring the baron of his great affection for the King of France, he told him also that the King of Prussia had authorised him to pass on information to Louis XVI that he could count on Prussian money as well as soldiers. Frederick William II could almost immediately set off at the head of 50 thousand soldiers if only the emperor decided to participate in the undertaking. Fersen did not have much hope, however, that former policy of Leopold II would change since he wrote that the emperor decided to recognise the tricolour French flag in Ostend and the unrest in the Austrian Netherlands could at any moment turn into uprising and revolt. Not good news came also from London where Craufurd was not able to get the English subsidies for the court of Stockholm. In that situation, the fact that George III and William Pitt were trying to convince Craufurd about their great liking for the Swedish ruler came as little consolation⁸⁴.

In an extensive message of November 4, 1791 Hans Axel von Fersen wrote, in turn, to Gustav III that, in his opinion, the cabinet of Vienna did not intend to take any actions with regard to France as Austrians first forced Louis XVI to adopt a new constitution and now they were trying to prevent actions taken by the northern powers in his defence. To confirm his position Fersen quoted information that Leopold II had accepted new credentials from the Ambassador of France, expressed satisfaction with accepting the constitution by Louis XVI and considered that step of the French ruler to release him from the obligation to interfere in the internal affairs of his country. Fersen supposed that such a policy of the court of Vienna resulted equally from the aversion of the Chancellor von Kaunitz to France and the weakness of Leopold II, too submissive to his own ministers. As the Austrian ministry seeking, according to Fersen, the alliance with England had to worry at the same time about the perspective of Franco-Prussian rapprochement, the Swedish diplomat suspected that before adopting a new political system Austria would want to make France so weak that it would become useless for its new ally. The only way to force the emperor to change his policies, according to Fersen, was founding the quadruple alliance between Sweden, Russia, Prussia and Spain. He also insisted on the immediate convocation of a congress of powers claiming that during deliberations the representatives of the

⁸⁴ See H.A. v. Fersen to Gustav III, Brussels, October 18, 1791 and the apostille to the message, RA, Gallica vol. 499; Z. Anusik, *Kongres zbrojny...*, pp. 144–145; For more details about contemporary activities of Louis Auguste, Baron of Breteuil, mentioned in Fersen's account see M. Price, *Louis XVI and Gustav III: Secret Diplomacy and Counter-Revolution 1791–1792*, "The Historical Journal", vol. XLII, No. 2, 1999, p. 447 and fol.

emperor would have assumed a clear and unequivocal attitude on both, the discussed issues and proposals submitted by other rulers. Fersen also attached great importance to the issue of a cooperation with Catherine II. He believed that the court of Russia could have a huge impact on the conduct of both, Leopold II and Charles IV who, in his view, should be appointed a formal leader of the future anti-French league. Answering the question of Gustav III on the attitude of the King and the Queen of France to the actions of princes and emigrants, Hans Axel von Fersen wrote that if the actions of the princes had not been previously agreed with the King of France, they would have never brought positive results. Agreeing on a common position was hard as the princes informed the nobility gathered in Koblenz of all their negotiations and did not keep anything a secret which, in turn, prevented the French royal couple from entrusting them with their genuine projects. On that occasion, Fersen explained to his lord that Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette cared primarily about gaining trust of the revolutionaries which could provide them with not only personal safety but also the possibility of taking effective actions. Therefore, the king and the queen did not want to allow to be disgraced as a result of a disclosure of their contact with the princes. Thus, Hans Axel von Fersen asked Gustav III to prevent brothers of Louis XVI from following crazy intentions (the king was to stop them from entering Alsace) and guide them in such a way that they rendered service to the common cause. The best means of exerting pressure on the French emigrants, according to Fersen, was a quick convocation of a congress which Marie Antoinette also demanded from the emperor. The Swedish diplomat said, however, that Leopold II was afraid of the congress because he knew that it was the only way to make him take actions or to expose his true intentions. Therefore, he predicted that the court of Vienna would try to ruin the idea⁸⁵.

On November 15, 1791 Hans Axel von Fersen noted in his diary that he had talked to the Baron of Breteuil about the recent developments in France. He had learnt from him that the king did not approve the Legislative's decrees against the emigrants and exercised his *veto*. It caused public outrage directed at him and the queen. In that conversation, they also brought up the issue of an election of the new Mayor of Paris. Fersen entirely shared the views of the court countering the candidature of La Fayette for the position. After being elected to a post of the mayor of the capital, La Fayette would, in fact, become too powerful and dangerous to the French royal couple. However, Fersen was worried after the meeting with the baron since it was rumoured in Paris that the king was planning a new escape from his

⁸⁵ See H.A. v. Fersen to Gustav III, Brussels, November 4, 1791 and apostille to the message, RA, Gallica vol. 499; Z. Anusik, *Kongres zbrojny...*, pp. 145–146. See also A. Söderhjelm, *op. cit.*, p. 299; *Le comte de Fersen et la cour de France. Extraits des papiers du grand maréchal de Suède, comte Jean Axel de Fersen*, R.M. Klinckowström (ed.), vol. I, Paris 1877, p. 215.

capital⁸⁶. A few days later Fersen wrote to Evert Taube that he was working on the preparation of a memorandum for Marie Antoinette on the current situation in France. The memorandum would also include guidelines for the conduct of the queen. In the same letter the count informed his friend that the emperor refused to give his consent to the convocation of the military congress on France. He hoped that it would finally open everybody's eyes to the behaviour of Leopold II⁸⁷.

In a message of November 27, 1791 Fersen informed Gustav III about the negative attitude of the court of Vienna towards the idea of the convocation of a congress. He wrote that the emperor had said that the planned congress would not bring any good. During the conference with François, Count of Mercy-Argenteau, Fersen heard similar arguments. The ambassador added, however, that since Louis XVI had sanctioned the constitution, actions should not be taken against his will. Fersen refuted that way of thinking and tried to convince the Austrian diplomat, quoting excerpts from the letter of Marie Antoinette, that the French king wished the congress to be convened. He finished, saying that if the emperor did not change his behaviour, the northern courts would do what he did not want to do. According to the Swedish diplomat, the Baron of Breteuil had talked with the Count of Mercy-Argenteau in a similar vein. In another conversation with Fersen the Austrian diplomat tried to shift the responsibility for an inaction of the powers over Louis XVI onto the ill will of the King of Prussia. Fersen reminded, however, that the emperor did not refer to the court of Berlin with an exact offer and it was not sure what the position of the court was. Somewhat disconcerted Mercy-Argenteau asked his interlocutor to keep refusal of the emperor in secret for the time being because if the circumstance changed the court of Vienna could express its consent to the convocation of the congress. Commenting on that statement of the Austrian diplomat, Fersen came to the conclusion that the Austrians, frightened of the perspective of the northern courts' interference in French affairs, would like to stop all the actions of Louis XVI and reserve the right to change their own position in case they were forced to agree on the convocation of the congress. For the time being, however, the court of Vienna was trying to discourage all other courts from the idea of the congress attributing intentions which were contrary to their way of thinking to the King and the Queen of France. Fersen hoped, however, that letters which the French royal couple intended to send to Gustav III, the Empress

⁸⁶ See Fersen's Diary: Brussels, November 15, 1791, H. v. Fersen, *Rescue the Queen. A Diary of the French Revolution 1789–1793* [further on: *Rescue the Queen*], A. Carlsson, E. Elstob (eds), London 1971, pp. 57–58. See also *Axel von Fersens dagbok* [further on: *Fersens dagbok*], A. Söderhjelm (ed.), vol. I, Stockholm 1925, pp. 148–150.

⁸⁷ See H.A. v. Fersen to E. Taube, Brussels, November 23, 1791, RA, Stafsundsarkivet, Evert Taubes Samling, vol. II.

of Russia and to the kings of Spain and Prussia would finally explain their real intentions and wishes. Hans Axel von Fersen also informed his lord that he had received a letter from Marie Antoinette who had written that sending back the letter of Louis XVI concerning the notification of the new constitution without reading it, the King of Sweden did what would be expected from all other monarchs. The queen, expressing her gratitude towards Gustav III for everything he had done for the French royal couple so far, demanded at the same time the convocation of the congress as soon as possible. She also wanted the future congress to put forward a categorical demand for the King of France to be present during it together with his family. Leaving Paris seemed to be the only purpose of all the activities of the royal couple. But before that happened, Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette had to do all they could to gain the greatest possible trust of the leaders of the Legislative. The queen's letter also included a warning that the King of France might be forced to write a personal letter to Gustav III which would be another piece of evidence that Louis XVI was not really free. According to Fersen, the letter of Marie Antoinette quoted by him was supposed to be the best evidence that the French royal couple did not intend to remain idle and all that was written about the alleged letter of the queen to the emperor about preventing his actions against France was untrue⁸⁸.

In the same message, Fersen wrote that Paul François, Duke of La Vauguyon, reported to the Baron of Breteuil that the Spanish court made the emperor a proposal to issue a joint declaration including the announcement that the powers did not recognise the sanction of Louis XVI for a new constitution until the King of France did not confirm it in the location selected by him. At the same time, the court of Madrid sent the emperor a plan of military operations. In the first place it assumed the invasion of the princes with troops of emigrants onto France. The encroachment of those troops would be preceded by the release of the manifesto in which the brothers of Louis XVI would announce that they were not encroaching in order to start war but in order to gather all good Frenchmen under their banners. The Spaniards also predicted that the troops of the emigrants would be supported by the Swedish army under the personal command of Gustav III. Other powers would provide the French princes and the Swedish king with the funds necessary for the implementation of the plan. To dismiss all suspicions that, undertaking an armed intervention in order to save Louis XVI, the powers, in fact, intended to conduct the partition of France, their armies were to remain on the borders retaining the operational readiness in case the need arose to assist the princes. Fersen said that the plan had already been presented to the emperor at the end of August and since then the Spaniards

⁸⁸ See H.A. v. Fersen to Gustav III, Brussels, November 27, 1791, *ibidem*, Gallica vol. 499.

had been waiting for his reply in vain. La Vauguyon also wrote that Florida Blanca was a strong supporter of restoration of the old order in France and giving back full power to the French royal couple. According to the Swedish diplomat, a telegram of La Vauguyon was a definite confirmation of a good will of Charles IV who could prove to be very useful for the ruler of France if only he had been adequately supported by the King of Sweden and the Empress of Russia. That point of view was also presented by Fersen in a very detailed memorandum sent to Louis XVI. Reports from Madrid were used by him as a pretext to re-raise the issue of the congress. He wrote to Gustav III that since the Spanish plan assumed the cooperation of all powers, the convocation of the congress would be absolutely essential because only that way could lead to the agreement between French neighbours and prevent the further loss of time resulting from ill will and treacherous sluggishness of the emperor⁸⁹.

On December 4, 1791 Hans Axel von Fersen informed Gustav III that he had received his orders of November 11. He was glad that the king fully approved of his actions. He warned, however, his lord against the actions of the court of Vienna. He feared that the Count of Mercy-Argenteau could return to Paris to take the position of the imperial ambassador again. In his opinion, everything should be done to prevent such a solution. Fersen also thought that it would make Staël von Holstein and Simolin leave Paris sooner. He also suggested that the courts of Spain, Naples and Sardinia should also recall their representatives from the French capital. An example of those courts could, in fact, persuade the emperor to change his behaviour. Returning once again to the issue of the congress, Fersen tried to persuade Gustav III that its convocation was an ardent wish of the French royal couple since Marie Antoinette regarded the military congress as a measure which would contribute to the growth of the prestige of the King of France, ensure the personal safety of him and his family and spread terror among all rebels. In accordance with the queen's wishes, one of the topics of the congress was to be the French constitution. Marie Antoinette did not predict, however, inviting either a representative of the Legislative or the king's envoy to the congress. The congress was to negotiate directly with Louis XVI which, in turn, was to facilitate agreeing on the king's actions with the representatives of the well-disposed powers. The queen also dreamt that the French royal family would be in the place of the congress. Commenting on the proposals presented by

⁸⁹ See *ibidem*. See also Z. Anusik, *Kongres zbrojny...*, pp. 149–151. It should be added that a day earlier Fersen sent a comprehensive memorandum to Marie Antoinette advising her to write letters to the rulers of Spain, Russia, Sweden and Prussia. See A. Söderhjelm, *Fersen et Marie-Antoinette. Journal intime et correspondance du comte Axel de Fersen*, Paris 1930, pp. 211–215; H.A. Barton, *Count Hans Axel von Fersen. Aristocrat in an Age of Revolution*, Boston 1975, p. 143.

Marie Antoinette, Hans Axel von Fersen noticed that the emperor's fear of the congress was the best evidence that it should be convened⁹⁰. Fersen attached to his message a letter of Louis XVI to Gustav III of November 26, 1791. Expressing his profound gratitude for everything that the King of Sweden had done for him so far, the ruler of France wrote that he still would like to see a faithful ally and a friend in him. Promising to inform him about all his projects Louis XVI at the same time asked Gustav for help and urging Catherine II to take action to his advantage. He also expressed hope that the king of Sweden would be able to prevent intentions of the emigrants gathered in Koblenz and Worms whose ideas were contrary to his plans which could have disastrous consequences both, for him and for his kingdom⁹¹.

On December 11, 1791 Fersen wrote, in turn, to Gustav III that based on the circular letter that the emperor had recently sent to the European rulers, there were no more doubts about evil intentions of that monarch towards the French royal couple. According to the Swedish diplomat, Leopold II was aiming at the collapse of France. For that purpose, he intended to ally with the King of Prussia and Holland. It was also said that he would propose England an access to the alliance. In Brussels, however, it was quite commonly believed that the London court would reject the offer. The emperor had allegedly written a letter to Catherine II insisting on her abandoning the intentions towards France. In the same message, Fersen assured Gustav III that he had grounds to believe that the King and the Queen of France had been well informed about the perfidy of the emperor and were offended at him the same way as the ruler of Sweden was. They decided, therefore, that they would no longer refer to the court of Vienna in any case. According to Fersen, a French royal couple, however, was exposed to a great danger and the situation was terrible, indeed. The Swedish diplomat also claimed that Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette were forced to behave in a very prudent way not to die in vain. He also warned his lord that they would be definitely lost if the public opinion learnt about even the smallest mention of their secret negotiations with foreign courts⁹².

In the message of December 19, 1791 Hans Axel von Fersen informed the court of Stockholm that the Count of Mercy-Argenteau would, however, not return to Paris. In his view, recalling their representatives from the French

⁹⁰ See H.A. v. Fersen to Gustav III, Brussels, December 4, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 499; Z. Anusik, *Kongres zbrojny...*, pp. 151–152.

⁹¹ See Louis XVI to Gustav III, Paris, November 26, 1791 (a copy), an enclosure to the message of H.A. v. Fersen of December 4, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 499. It is worth mentioning here that following the advice of Fersen, at the turn of November and December 1791, Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette also turned for help to the rulers of Russia, Spain and Prussia. See N. Åke-son, *op. cit.*, pp. 171–175; H.A. Barton, *op. cit.*, p. 144; A. Mathiez, *Rewolucja...*, pp. 172–173; B. Dembiński, *Rosya a Rewolucya Francuska*, Kraków 1896, pp. 179–180.

⁹² See H.A. v. Fersen to Gustav III, Brussels, December 11, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 499; Z. Anusik, *Kongres zbrojny...*, pp. 152–153.

capital, announced by Gustav III and Catherine II, had a decisive impact on the change of the position of the court of Vienna. A great sensation in Brussels was triggered at the same time by the news from Paris where the Legislative Assembly had begun to consider the draft of declaring war against the electors and the German princes granting refuge to the French emigrants. François, Count of Mercy-Argenteau told Fersen that he was very pleased with that turn of events because the attitude of the French could force the emperor to take actions to defend the threatened interests of the German princes. The Count of Mercy-Argenteau informed also the Swedish diplomat about an intention to conclude the Austro-Prussian alliance.

Responding to Fersen's remark that in such a way the emperor would lead to loosening of his ties with Russia, the count allegedly said that Leopold II intended to invite other powers to the alliance of Vienna and Berlin. The Austrian diplomat did not, however, convince his Swedish friend who did not believe that the creation of a universal coalition of European powers was possible. Franz Georg, Count von Metternich-Winneburg, who talked to the Baron of Breteuil said, in turn, that the treaty with Holland, planned by the court of Vienna, would not be a formal alliance but only a trade treaty. Recent moves of the emperor did not appeal to Fersen who, like usual, accused him of inconsistency and the tendency to intrigues. At the end of his account, the Swedish diplomat wrote that the Baron of Breteuil had taken steps to persuade the King of Prussia via Stadthouder of the United Provinces of Netherlands to make a proposal to the emperor to undertake joint actions against France. According to Fersen, the offer of Frederick William II should persuade the emperor to make a final decision. If, however, the offer was rejected, the entire Europe could finally learn about the insincerity and treachery of the court of Vienna⁹³.

On December 24, 1791 Hans Axel von Fersen sent Louis XVI to Paris a plan of the landing of intervention troops in Normandy⁹⁴. The next day, in turn, he informed his lord of receiving his orders of December 2. He also expressed the opinion that Leopold II would not agree to convene the congress despite the entreaties of Marie Antoinette (the queen wrote about it to the Count of Mercy-Argenteau) and Louis XVI. Having received a letter from the King of France, the Baron of Breteuil had a long conversation with François, Count of Mercy-Argenteau. The latter, however, opposed the idea of the convocation of the congress regarding it as useless and not bringing any benefit. Nevertheless, Breteuil suggested introducing to the programme of its sessions three cases pointed out by the queen: the issue of Avignon, the problem of estates of the German princes in Alsace and a guarantee of the powers

⁹³ See H.A. v. Fersen to Gustav III, Brussels, December 19, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 499; Z. Anusik, *Kongres zbrojny...*, pp. 153–154.

⁹⁴ See N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

for all treaties which France had joined. However, only 12 hours after that conversation, the Count of Mercy-Argenteau promised to send the requests of the royal couple to Vienna.

In a letter to the Baron of Breteuil Louis XVI also explained in details the motives of his behaviour towards the electors. He wrote that since he had once decided to act in accordance with the principles of the constitution and gain trust of its supporters, he could not refuse to do what he was demanded. Moreover, he expected good effects of such a conduct hoping that other powers would take interest in the matter of electors. The King of France also ordered Breteuil to warn other courts about the real reasons of his actions and authorised Fersen to inform Gustav III about the case. Fersen also wrote that the Baron of Breteuil was trying to affect the content of the response of the electors to the note of Louis XVI. Since the count considered the actions of the King of France to remain in accordance with the wishes of Gustav III, he decided to write about the matter to Baron Oxenstierna in Koblenz. In the further part of his account Fersen wrote that according to his suggestions, approved previously by Gustav III, Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette decided to write confidential letters to the King of Sweden, the Empress of Russia and the rulers of Spain and Prussia. The letters to the empress and the King of Prussia were written by the queen while the letters to the rulers of Sweden and Spain were written personally by the King of France. The Marquis of Bombelles, a friend and confidant of the Baron of Breteuil, was to take the letter of Marie Antoinette to St. Petersburg while Marie François, Chevalier de Bressac, a very shrewd schemer, was sent with her letter to Berlin. After delivering the queen's letter, Bressac was to stay in the capital of Prussia where he would henceforth represent the interests of the French royal couple, just like the Marquis of Bombelles in St. Petersburg. Both, however, were to be agents without an official character. Fersen also learnt that Louis XVI was forced to send the Count of Ségur to Berlin. The Swedish diplomat did not know the purpose of his mission but did not doubt that it would be detrimental to the interests of France. To thwart the envoy of the Legislative, Fersen sent a courier to Berlin to inform Christian Ehrenfried von Carisien about everything. At the end of his message, the count spoke about the plight of Louis XVI who was forced to act in a hostile and suspicious environment. He also asked Gustav III to inform Catherine II about all the problems of the French royal couple, so that she was not surprised by the news about the next moves of the Tuileries court. Fersen predicted that newspapers may reach St. Petersburg before a confidential letter of Marie Antoinette⁹⁵.

⁹⁵ See H.A. v. Fersen to Gustav III, Brussels, December 25, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 499; Z. Anusik, *Kongres zbrojny...*, pp. 154–156.

On January 1, 1792 Count Fersen noted in his diary that the Elector of Cologne ordered all emigrants to leave Andernach. At the same time he asked Archduchess Maria Christina for the protection of the Austrian army. She, however, refused, using the lack of appropriate authorisations from the emperor as an excuse⁹⁶. A few days later the Swedish diplomat thanked the king for his support for the idea of the convocation of the military congress on France. In his view, the emperor still, however, strongly opposed the proposal. In the same letter Fersen wrote that he had delivered two very long letters of Gustav III to Marie Antoinette. He had also received letters from Carisien and Oxenstierna. The count thought that the latter had already submitted a detailed report to the king about all his actions and warned him about the great indiscretion in Koblenz. Informing the king about the strengthening of the Austrian troops in Belgium, Fersen said that the government intended to increase their numerical strength to 70–72 thousand people. He also wrote that the Legislative Assembly had sent Talleyrand, Bishop of Autun, on a diplomatic mission to London which he had been warned about by the queen. In connection with that matter, Fersen wrote to a trusted person in the English capital, having a significant influence on the English ministry asking to be exactly informed on the course and results of the mission of the Bishop of Autun⁹⁷.

In mid-January 1792 Fersen received orders of Gustav III of December 22, 1791. The king ordered the count to go to Paris and hand Louis XVI the memorandum prepared at the court of Stockholm. The King of Sweden suggested that the French royal family should leave Paris as soon as possible. It was supposed to be one of the most important points of the plan of a future invasion of France. Thus, Fersen was expected to prepare a new plan of escape of Louis XVI from his capital⁹⁸. He started his actions from writing to Marie Antoinette and asking her to agree to his visit in the Tuileries. While waiting for a reply on January 20, 1792 he wrote in his diary that the Prince of Condé had received a letter from the emperor in which Leopold II ordered him to leave Ettenheim and send all the troops back, including a legion of the Viscount of Mirabeau. Yet, on the very next day, a note appeared in Fersen's diary that the Queen of France agreed on his arrival in Paris⁹⁹.

⁹⁶ See Fersen's Diary: Brussels, January 1, 1792, *Rescue the Queen*, p. 60; *Fersens dagbok*, pp. 153–154; Z. Anusik, *Kongres zbrojny...*, p. 156.

⁹⁷ See H.A. v. Fersen to Gustav III, Brussels, January 5, 1792, RA, Gallica vol. 499.

⁹⁸ See Gustav III to H.A. v. Fersen, Stockholm, December 22, 1791, *Rescue the Queen*, p. 59.

⁹⁹ See Fersen's Diary, Brussels, January 20 and 21, 1792, *Rescue the Queen*, p. 61; *Fersens dagbok*, p. 157. See also H.A. Barton, *op. cit.*, p. 146.

On January 22, 1792 Hans Axel von Fersen informed Gustav III that Marie Antoinette had been forced to send a memorandum prepared by messieurs Barnave, Lameth and Duport to the emperor. According to Fersen, the memorandum was to be very bad and very badly written and the main goal of the authors was to intimidate the court of Vienna and dissuade it from declaring war on France. The constitutional party leaders also sought to convince Leopold II that an alliance with France and supporting the constitution in the form in which it had been passed by the previous assembly was in their own interest (due to the safety of Belgium). According to Fersen, the great fear of the Feuillants of the perspective of establishing a universal league of powers was visible in each line of the memorandum. Particular concerns of the Triumvirate was caused by the idea of the military congress. The views of the Swedish diplomat were not, however, shared by the Count of Mercy-Argenteau who, during the conversation with the Baron of Breteuil, allegedly said that the mentioned memorandum was not so bad and contained a number of quite rational thoughts. In the further part of his account Fersen wrote that the dispersion of the emigrants' troops was undoubtedly a disaster for them but not for the cause since the count did not think that emigrants could in any way render service to Louis XVI. He was sure that they would not have achieved anything without the support of the foreign powers which were not ready to act yet. The dispersion of the princes' troops could instead lead to the weakening of rebels' vigilance and give the powers necessary time to properly prepare for a deciding campaign. On the basis of Carisien's reports from Berlin, Fersen came to the conclusion that it would be difficult to persuade Prussia to take action independent of the court of Vienna. Therefore, he suggested Gustav III that he should, along with Catherine II and Charles IV, request the King of Prussia to engage in an expedition against revolutionary France. He also suggested presenting a similar request towards the emperor at the court of Vienna. He was convinced that pressure from three courts would finally force Leopold II and Frederick William II to take vigorous actions¹⁰⁰. Fersen attached to his message a copy of a letter of Marie Antoinette to Leopold II and an extract from a letter which the Queen of France sent him to Brussels. Both letters of the queen were to be a further piece of evidence that Louis XVI and his wife only pretended to collaborate with the Legislative Assembly and, in fact, were eagerly awaiting foreign intervention in France¹⁰¹.

¹⁰⁰ See H.A. v. Fersen to Gustav III, Brussels, January 22, 1792, RA, Gallica vol. 499; Z. Anusik, *Kongres zbrojny...*, pp. 156–157.

¹⁰¹ In the letter to her brother, the Queen of France wrote that she had been forced to send the memorial to him and she had been forced to write a letter to him last July. She asked the emperor to send her a reply which she could show to the authors of the memorial. The response should imply that the emperor believed that his sister shared the views contained in the document sent

A few days later Fersen sent a message to Stockholm where he wrote that the recent reports from Berlin confirmed the good disposition of the King of Prussia and the bad disposition of the emperor. However, Christian Ehrenfried von Carisien warned Fersen that the court of Berlin would decide to take steps in French case only together with the emperor. Therefore, a representative of Gustav III to Brussels demanded again that the Stockholm court persuaded Frederick William II to make a demand towards the emperor to take quick and decisive actions, similar to those taken by the rulers of Sweden, Russia and Spain in Vienna. In the same message Fersen also made a proposal to establish military warehouses on the French borders believing that it would speed up a final decision to start the intervention in the internal affairs of that country¹⁰². He attached to his account copies of the letters of Frederick William II to the Baron of Breteuil and Louis XVI. In the opinion of the Swedish diplomat, both of those documents proved that the king intended to take an active part in a resolution of French affairs. What was, however, far more important for Fersen, the letters of the King of Prussia quite clearly showed that he was a strong supporter of the convocation of the military congress of the powers. It might, therefore, seem that the French royal couple got another powerful ally who would help in the task of restoring an old order in a country ruled by them¹⁰³.

to him. Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI also hoped that the emperor would be able to distinguish their true interests from what they both had to do because of his personal safety. Moreover, the queen complained that she did not know the plans of the emperor at all. Yet, she commended herself to his friendship and counted on support. See Marie Antoinette to Leopold II, Paris, no date (a copy), an enclosure to the message of Fersen of January 22, 1792, *ibidem*. In a letter to Hans Axel von Fersen, Marie Antoinette wrote, in turn, that its deliverer, whom she fully trusted, was carrying an absurd memorial to Vienna which she was obliged to send to the emperor. She considered explaining to the emperor that there was not a single sentence which would come from the royal couple or reflected their way of thinking to be the most important issue. She said, however, that she had to receive a reply from her brother which she should boldly show the real authors of the memorial. She also asked Fersen to inform the Count of Mercy-Argenteau about everything. According to Marie Antoinette, the authors of the memorial clearly feared the emperor. For the reasons of security of the royal couple it was, however, necessary to treat them gently, trying to gain their trust in the behaviour of the king and the queen. Marie Antoinette also complained about the silence of Vienna and Brussels. She asked Fersen to make the Count of Mercy-Argenteau inform her on a regular basis about the intentions of the emperor so that she could adapt her own conduct to them. The queen also explained why she had not warned Fersen about the intentions of the assembly towards the German electors. But everything happened so fast (final decision was taken by deputies at night) that Marie Antoinette could not send the message to Brussels. See Extract from the letter of Marie Antoinette to H.A. v. Fersen, Paris, no date, an enclosure to the message of Fersen of January 22, 1792, *ibidem*.

¹⁰² See H.A. v. Fersen to Gustav III, Brussels, January 25, 1792, *ibidem*; Z. Anusik, *Kongres zbrojny...*, p. 160.

¹⁰³ In a letter to the Baron of Breteuil the King of Prussia wrote that the courier had brought to Berlin a secret letter of Louis XVI of December 3, 1791 and a letter of the baron of the same

In the message of January 29, 1792 Hans Axel von Fersen wrote to Gustav III that after the last conversation with the Count of Mercy-Argenteau he had come to the conclusion that the minister seemed to regard war with France as inevitable. Fersen doubted, however, that the emperor looked at the matter in the same way, all the more so because the count had lost much of its former significance at the court of Vienna¹⁰⁴. A few days later Fersen learnt from Marie Antoinette that the act on the passport introduction, designed as a preventive measure against a possible escape of the king, would make his arrival in Paris impossible. The news put the count in quite a bad mood¹⁰⁵. Nevertheless, on February 5, 1792 he informed Gustav III that he had received good news from the court of Madrid. He also agreed with the proposal of the king that both, Spain and England should refrain from any direct actions against France. Returning once again to the issue of convocation of the military congress, Fersen again put forward a whole series of accusations against the emperor consistently opposing the implementation of the idea. He also wrote that Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette had

day. Frederick William II confirmed his keen interest in the situation in France and the fate of the French royal family. He supported the idea of the convocation of the congress and promised to sound out both, the attitude of the emperor and the Empress of Russia as well as the King of Sweden in that matter. He warned his correspondent, however, that in case of the convocation of the congress, the welfare of the state and subjects forced him to claim fair compensation for expenses incurred in the interest of the King of France. As far as the place and method of the convocation of the congress was concerned, he sent Breteuil to negotiate directly with his cabinet. He expressed his satisfaction with sending baron's trusted representative to Berlin and the French royal couple. He eventually promised to keep secret all matters directly concerning Louis XVI. See Frederick William II to L.A. de Breteuil, Berlin, no date (a copy), an enclosure to the message of Fersen of January 25, 1792, *ibidem*. In response to the letter of Louis XVI of December 3, 1791, the King of Prussia thanked for having confidence in him and confirmed his interest in the situation of the King and the Queen of France. He wrote that he would like to be useful in making the situation more in line with their point of view. He confirmed his readiness to support the idea of the convocation of the military congress and promised to immediately sound out the position of the emperor in the matter. However, he warned the ruler of France that he was going to discuss all his actions in his case with the emperor. He seemed, however, to be optimistic, because he claimed that in spite of all the difficulties and delays connected with the convocation of the military congress, it could be assumed that its results would be in line with the expectations of the King of France. Also in the same letter, Frederick William II spoke of the need to consider expenses that he would have to incur in the interests of France. He also wheedled out an adequate compensation in the interests of the state ruled by him. He eventually promised to keep all correspondence in secret but without taking responsibility for proceedings in that case of other courts authorised by Louis XVI to his secrets. See Frederick William II to Louis XVI, Berlin, January 14, 1792 (a copy), an enclosure to the message of Fersen of January 25, 1792, RA, Gallica vol. 499; Z. Anusik, *Kongres zbrojny...*, pp. 160–161.

¹⁰⁴ See H.A. v. Fersen to Gustav III, Brussels, January 29, 1792, RA, Gallica vol. 499.

¹⁰⁵ See Fersen's Diary: Brussels, February 3, 1792, *Rescue the Queen*, p. 62; *Fersens dagbok*, pp. 159–160.

expressed the hope that Denmark would also accede to the future league. That proposal could not have appealed to the king. On the other hand, Gustav III certainly had nothing against the idea of neutralising England by sending (via Craufurd) a letter to the English King, George III¹⁰⁶.

On February 6, 1792 Hans Axel von Fersen received news that Louis XVI did not intend to sign the act on passports. In that situation the count decided to go to Paris and began preparations for the expedition. A few days later he met with a Russian envoy to France, recalled by Catherine II Ivan Simolin, who was passing through Brussels. He learnt from him that he was going to Vienna at the request of Marie Antoinette to pass on the queen's request for help to the emperor. On February 11, 1792 at 9:30 a.m. Fersen left Brussels and set off towards Paris. He was accompanied by his friend and aide, Major Anders Fredrik Reuterswärd. Both of them had passports issued on false names and pretended Swedish couriers going to Portugal. Fersen had letters addressed to the Portuguese queen and the memorandum of Gustav III to Louis XVI. In the event of the unforeseen problems Fersen also had credentials as the Ambassador of King of Sweden to Portugal. Two travellers spent the whole next day on the way. The journey went smoothly, not counting a minor accident when in Péronne their carriage broke and they had to wait for four hours for the repair. They were very well received everywhere and the encountered people were friendly and polite¹⁰⁷.

On February 13 at 9:30 a.m. Hans Axel von Fersen arrived in Paris. He went straight to a meeting with François, Baron of Goguelat. He, however, did not appear at the appointed place. The baron appeared before 7 p.m., testing Fersen's nerves. After the meeting with Goguelat, the count immediately went to the meeting with the queen taking the route which he had known for a long time. Later that same evening he saw Marie Antoinette. However, he did not meet with Louis XVI. He spent the night at the Tuileries so that his visits in the palace would not arouse interest of National Guards guarding the royal residence. It was not until the next day when at 6 p.m. Fersen met with the king. Louis XVI rejected the proposal to escape from Paris, claiming that he had given his word of honour that he would not do it. Eventually, however, after much insistence, he accepted the idea of Gustav III agreeing to escape through the forests, along the old smugglers' route in the direction of Flanders but only after the allied armies had invaded France. The king also said that he would wish to have the convocation of the congress of the powers convened. If, however, the project failed, he was ready to accept more determined actions and take all risks. Louis XVI believed, however, that in fact he was not risking anything because the rebels would

¹⁰⁶ See H.A. v. Fersen to Gustav III, Brussels, February 5, 1792, RA, Gallica vol. 499.

¹⁰⁷ See Fersen's Diary: Brussels, February 6 and 9, as well as 11 and 12, 1792, *Rescue the Queen*, pp. 62–63; *Fersens dagbok*, pp. 160–162; Z. Anusik, *Kongres zbrojny...*, p. 164.

need his mediation in negotiations for capitulation with the victorious powers. The king also agreed on using force to restore the lost prerogatives of the crown. He also ruled out the possibility of negotiations with the rebels. Going back to the past, Louis XVI told Fersen that he had lost his only chance on July 14, 1789 when his escape to Metz had been already prepared. Yet, the Count of Provence and the Marshal of Broglie opposed the escape of the king and, therefore, it failed. The King of France also persuaded Fersen that he was not truly free and did not have freedom of action and, therefore, the powers should completely exclude him from their calculations. During that conversation Marie Antoinette said, in turn, that she had heard from Alexandre de Lameth and Adrien Duport that foreign troops were the only hope of France as the situation could no longer be as it was and things had gone further than they both wanted. The queen said that she accepted their offers but she did not trust them because she thought that they wanted to save their own skins and win the favour of the royal couple in advance. According to Marie Antoinette, all present ministers were traitors and the greatest one was the Minister of Internal Affairs, Bon Claude Cahier de Gréville. Narbonne and Delessart also thought only about themselves and not about the king's interests. It appeared from what the queen said that she had confidence only in the Minister of the Navy, Antoine François Bertrand de Molleville but, being isolated, he was not able to do anything good. Later in the conversation the issue of the king's escape of June 20, 1791 was also raised. French royal couple drew Fersen's attention to the fact that since then very strict security measures had been introduced. It gave the count a lot to think about. After the conversation and leaving the Tuileries, Fersen initially intended to go towards Spain as far as Orléans and Tours and then return the same way to Paris. In reality, however, he did not leave the French capital. His mistress, Eleonore Sullivan, hid him for all that time in the attic in the house of his friend, James Quentin Craufurd¹⁰⁸.

On February 19, 1792 Hans Axel von Fersen sent Reuterswärd to the Swedish *chargé d'affaires* at Paris, Erik Bergstedt. In his letter he explained his situation and intentions to Bergstedt, asking him to prepare courier passports. Everything went well. No one followed nor tried to stop Reuterswärd. The next day Fersen met in person (on the special request of the *chargé d'affaires*) with Bergstedt. The count thought that the latter one seemed very scared but everything went well. Reuterswärd got a courier passport and Fersen received a passport stating that he was his servant. They also discussed all the actions to be taken in the event of the count being arrested by the French authorities. After speaking with the official representative

¹⁰⁸ See Fersen's Diary: Paris, February 13 and 14, 1792, *Rescue the Queen*, pp. 63–67; *Fersens dagbok*, pp. 162–167; Z. Anusik, *Kongres zbrojny...*, pp. 165–164.

of his court to Paris, Fersen came to the conclusion that Bergstedt was a follower of democratic views and belonged to the circle of devoted admirers of the previous National Assembly, the Lameths and their associates. On February 21 Hans Axel von Fersen completed all the preparations for his departure from the French capital. He wrote to the queen to ask for the last meeting. Goguelat came to him and the count went with him to Marie Antoinette. They drank tea together and then Fersen had dinner together with the king and the queen. He left the Tuileries at midnight. He went to Reuterswärd's inn, put on a fur coat and at 1 a.m. got into the carriage with his aide. They both had nothing in their pockets to avoid being identified if they were stopped. Nevertheless, Fersen was very anxious. There was a lot of snow on the way, yet, the travellers had no problems with leaving Paris since their carriage was pulled by three horses¹⁰⁹.

All the next day they headed towards the border without any problems and being neither stopped nor questioned by anyone. Yet, on February 23 they had to change to a different vehicle because the carriage was too light and could not move on the road full of snow and ice. They were stopped only in a small village near the border. The local official questioned validity of the Reuterswärd's passport due to the fact that it did not contain the description of the owner. At the request of Fersen, Reuterswärd, who initially tried to look down on the French official, became more polite which mollified the Frenchman a little. The coachman testified that they were the couriers of the Swedish embassy, thanks to which they could pass through the local station. Just before the border they were also stopped twice. Later, however, on the border the travellers were searched for money but the whole process was given up. A mile behind Orchies, Hans Axel von Fersen and Anders Fredrik Reuterswärd left the French territory. At about 3 a.m. they arrived at Brussels. Fersen was glad to be back in his own four walls after such a successful trip. The next day the count ate lunch with the Baron of Breteuil. Many of his friends did not even notice his departure and had no idea that he had left Brussels¹¹⁰.

On February 27, 1792 Fersen wrote in his diary that the Baron of Breteuil had learnt that the Count of Mercy-Argenteau blamed him for turning Marie Antoinette against the emperor. The Swedish diplomat began wondering where the count could have learnt such news and came to the conclusion that they could only have come from his own letters to the queen. Fersen did not believe, however, that the Austrians were able to decipher them. In his

¹⁰⁹ See Fersen's Diary: Paris, February 19 and 20, as well as February 21, 1792, *Rescue the Queen*, pp. 67–68; *Fersens dagbok*, pp. 168–170.

¹¹⁰ See Fersen's Diary: Brussels, February 22 and 23, as well as February 24, 1792, *Rescue the Queen*, pp. 68–70; *Fersens dagbok*, pp. 170–171, 178. On Fersen's trip to Paris see also H.A. Barton, *op. cit.*, pp. 147–148.

opinion, the Swedish diplomatic code was too complicated for them and, besides, he always wrote letters to Paris with the secret ink. Breteuil also told Fersen that Mercy-Argenteau had long played against him and repeatedly asked Louis XVI not to confide any secrets to the Swede. The next day Hans Axel von Fersen received favourable news from Berlin. He learnt that Charles William Ferdinand, Duke von Brunswick had been appointed the commander in chief of the Prussian army and he went on to develop plans for a future campaign against France. Therefore, Bischoffwerder was to go to Vienna to agree on all the details with the emperor. Yet, what pleased Fersen most was the fact that both courts had decided to allot 50 thousand troops to the military action against the French rebels¹¹¹.

But not everything was going as the Swedish diplomat had intended. A message from Gustav III of January 20, 1792 was waiting for him in Brussels in which the king withdrew his earlier support for the idea of the convocation of the military congress insisting at the same time on organising a new escape of the royal family. In his account of the recent stay in France written on February 29, 1792 Hans Axel von Fersen referred to both issues raised by the king. He began by saying that he had provided the French royal couple with many extracts from messages and letters which he had received from Gustav III. In return, the queen assured him solemnly that neither she nor her husband would cease to plot against the constitution. Fersen also wrote that he had developed a new plan of an escape of the royal family. According to his assumptions, the royal couple was to flee through the forest along the routes usually used by smugglers. About 6–12 miles from the border they were to be awaited by an intervention 50-strong unit from one of the armies which was to escort them till the moment of crossing the border. The entire army was to remain in full readiness in the event of being necessary to intervene in favour of refugees. The plan had appealed to the king and the queen who had promised to implement it if the opportunity to escape arose. Fersen had discouraged the royal couple from the immediate implementation of his idea because of the great danger in the event of being re-arrested by the rebels. Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette were, however, to be ready to escape at the time when the intervention armies reached the borders of France. In his account, Fersen also clearly highlighted the fact that the King of France had not changed his opinion on the congress and would like it to be convened as soon as possible. Louis XVI took that opportunity to express his wish that he would like the powers participating in the congress to submit a request for freeing him and releasing him from Paris by the rebels. However, because the king did not think that those wishes would be

¹¹¹ See Fersen's Diary: Brussels, February 27 and 28, 1792, *Rescue the Queen*, pp. 70–71; *Fersens dagbok*, pp. 178–179.

ever fulfilled, he in advance gave the powers a free hand to act in his favour. During the conversation it turned out that Louis XVI was about to issue a declaration that he was imprisoned in Paris by the rebels and, therefore, he was forced to appeal to the world powers for help. Fersen managed to prevent him from realisation of that idea convincing the French ruler that such a behaviour could expose both, him and his family to the great danger¹¹².

Fersen also explained to Louis XVI that Gustav III and Catherine II intended to tolerate neither a new form of the government in France nor any agreement with the rebels since both rulers aimed at the unconditional restoration of the monarchy and the royal authority. The queen received Fersen's words enthusiastically. The king, though, with hesitation as he was not sure whether that goal could be actually achieved. However, Gustav III assured the envoy that he had never intended to enter into agreements with the rebels. He explained his relation with the assembly and the people of the revolution. He also authorised Fersen to transmit information to Gustav III that he had approved of a decree on the sequestration of emigrants' estates just to prevent looting and devastation. Making a promise not to cooperate with the rebels, Louis XVI also asked his interlocutor to explain to the King of Sweden the motives of his conduct and point to the reasons which made him agree on everything he was demanded. Fersen assured the king that Gustav III was well aware of his situation but believed that all concessions to the King of France should lead only to gaining time and lulling rebels' vigilance in an illusory sense of security. However, Louis XVI seemed so depressed and resentful when he spoke about his solitude and a complete isolation that tears appeared in Fersen's eyes. At the end of the conversation with the Swedish diplomat the French royal couple came to the consistent conclusion that there was no other way to restore royal authority but with force and the active involvement of the foreign powers. Referring to the final conclusion, Fersen also mentioned in his report that the emperor suggested the convocation of the congress of the powers in Vienna. Yet, the count liked neither too great distance of the meeting place from the borders of France nor the suggestion of Leopold II that the powers should be represented at the congress by their current ambassadors to the Austrian capital. He also questioned the rationality of the idea of the Count of Mercy-Argenteau who told Breteuil that if there was no congress in Vienna, it could be convened by him in Madrid. Fersen himself insisted on the convocation of the congress in Aachen or Koblenz. He believed, however, that an essential condition of its success must be sending troops by all the interested powers¹¹³.

¹¹² See H.A. v. Fersen to Gustav III, Brussels, February 29, 1792, RA, Gallica vol. 499; Z. Anusik, *Kongres zbrojny...*, pp. 165–166.

¹¹³ See H.A. v. Fersen to Gustav III, Brussels, February 29, 1792, RA, Gallica vol. 499. Extracts from the same message see also *Rescue the Queen*, pp. 71–72.

To confirm his reports on the proposals made by Leopold II, Fersen attached to his report an extensive extract from the message of the Viscount of Caraman to the Baron of Breteuil sent from Berlin on February 4, 1792¹¹⁴.

¹¹⁴ It appeared from the text sent by Fersen to Stockholm that the viscount had had a conversation with Count Schulenburg. He learnt from him that immediately after the King of Prussia had received a letter from Louis XVI, a courier had been sent to Vienna to speak to the emperor and arrange the principles of the cooperation between the two courts on France. On February 3 the courier returned to Berlin bringing the following suggestions of Leopold II: 1. Both powers equipped over 70 thousand soldiers who would be sent to the Rhineland 2. All powers would be asked to declare the number of people who they would like to add to the Austrian and Prussian contingents and to arrange joint actions with them 3. All the ministers accredited to Vienna would receive authorisations in reference to those circumstances without forming a separate congress *ad hoc* (Caraman was told that Count Bischoffwerder was to go to Vienna to deal with that issue) 4. The joint declaration would be issued by the allied powers demanding the restoration of all the rights and the return of the estates to the princes affected by the revolution and the immediate return to the situation from April 1789; returning the County of Avignon to the pope; the disarmament of all troops that exceeded the peaceful state of the French army and refrained from any hostile preparations; and formal repudiation of all the intrigues opposing the laws of humanity aiming at destruction of the peace of other governments. The last paragraph was to demand for restoration of all the monarchical rights of the King of France. Caraman told Schulenburg that the latter paragraph might pose a threat to the personal security of the king and, in his opinion, more cautious actions should be taken. He also suggested that, at the time when sufficiently strong armies were gathered, the powers should demand, above all, putting the king in such a state of physical freedom that it could no longer be doubted that his will had not suffered under the force. The Minister of Prussia seemed to agree with the idea of a French diplomat. He said that he would repeat the content of the conversation to Frederick William II and the answer to the emperor's proposal would be sent to the imperial Vienna within 3–4 days. He also spoke about a circular letter of the emperor to all the powers. In his opinion, Leopold II was certain of all courts apart from England, Holland, Denmark and several minor republics. Schulenburg also spoke with a great concern about the fact that the Empress of Russia would like to see the French princes on the first line of action against France. Caraman felt obliged to state that the attachment of the princes to the king would not allow them to do anything that would bring him misfortune without bringing any benefit. He also mentioned that the differences between the king's party and the party of the royal princes generally referred only to the disputes on the question of the measures which should be taken to achieve the common objectives. According to him, the empress knew nothing about the agreement between the two parties of the conflict, which in short time should make the princes serve the king without putting his personal safety at risk. After a short introduction and compliments to the viscount, Schulenburg, with some embarrassment, went on to the matter of the compensation for the expenses which Prussia would incur for the cause of Louis XVI. Caraman said that the danger threatening all thrones made the matter of the French a common cause of all the kings. He asked the count whether it should not be anything natural to act in defence of the cause of all the rulers who had been offended in the person of Louis XVI. He said that if well-minded Frenchmen were abandoned, it would be avenged by the misfortunes that would fall on Europe. He said, finally, that it was hard to combine that principle with a noble way of thinking of the King of Prussia, the way which should be shared by his minister. Schulenburg defended himself poorly and concluded by saying that it was the court of Vienna that had insisted on putting forward that condition.

In the same package of correspondence Hans Axel von Fersen also sent to Stockholm a memorandum written by himself, concerning the rules for the convocation and carrying out of the military congress. He wrote as follows: "In order for the congress to be useful, it must be 1. Impressive. The arrival of the representatives, who will take part in its deliberations, must be accompanied by marching troops ready to act if necessary. 2. It is necessary to reject, if possible, all the intrigues and ambitions; the restoration of the French monarchy, giving the king his power back and nipping the evil, which can threaten all other kings, in the bud should be the only objective of the representatives and should move away all other political views until this important issue is won. To achieve this goal, the congress must be active from the first days of its deliberations. And to make it active, the representatives' instructions contain uniform *modus operandi*, arranged with the King of France. It seems to me, judging from current circumstances and a current position of the royal family that there should be no more than two action plans. First, it is necessary to distribute the plan proposed by the King of Spain, announcing that the king is held in captivity and will be considered as such as long as he stays in Paris. That all acts and declarations issued by him will be void. That in the current state of affairs the powers will not negotiate with him until he regains full freedom. That the powers demand, as a prerequisite, that the king and his family leave Paris at a fixed time for a fixed place not far from the border and be surrounded by troops and guards which they choose themselves. From there, the king will negotiate with the powers on necessary matters. There, the king will also renew in whole or in part his sanction of the constitution or he will propose amendments if he deems it necessary. If the rebels again persuade the people to object to the king's departure, the powers will have another piece of evidence of the king's captivity and will use forces, which will be collected, to make the rebels obey, restore freedom to the king and give the people prosperity and peace back. The threat of large forces ready to act should cause fear and anger in the ranks of the rebels. Border provinces threatened by the hostile invasion from all sides, manifestos written in a moderate way, in which only the rebels will be threatened, promising security, patronage and forgetting the past, of calm people and those who should be regarded as misguided by

It was the emperor that demanded guarantees, while the King of Prussia would be satisfied with the simple repayment of the incurred expenses. Caraman ended the conversation by saying that he would be glad to pass his employers information about the real intentions of the court of Berlin, which indecisiveness and sluggishness had been caused by the behaviour of the court of Vienna. He also assured his interlocutor about the great confidence always placed by the King of France in the court of Berlin and his satisfaction with the efforts made by the King of Prussia in his cause. See *Extrait de la dépêche du Vicomte de Caraman au Baron de Breteuil de 4 février 1792*, an enclosure to Fersen's message of February 29, 1792, RA, Gallica vol. 499.

perfidious insinuations of the rebels, who under cover of the public good want to seize thousand times more tyrannical power than the power taken away from the king (to prove that it is enough to simply compare the amount of taxes paid by the people under the old and the new government) should inevitably return to the obedience to the ruler which, in turn, will spread terror in Paris where people will feel exposed to a great danger after dissent of the provinces. In this case, the goal will be achieved and the king will be able to negotiate with the powers. If, however, the threat of the powers persuades the rebels to implement the plan which they say is ready, of moving the king inside the kingdom, somewhere in the Cévennes, war will have to be declared and its outcome should not be questionable. Spanish and Sardinian troops in the south, Swiss troops, troops of the empire and the emperor, the King of Prussia, the King of Sweden and the Empress of Russia in the east and north; Swedish and Russian fleet in the west will form a respectable chain which should result in keeping a tight rein on or winning over the frontier provinces and narrowing the territory remaining in the hands of the rebels. If an armed demonstration of these troops does not bring an expected result in the frontier provinces, the powers will start hostile actions towards them. As for the personal safety of the king and his family, nothing should be feared as in this case they will be valuable hostages for rebels who want to get better terms of surrender"¹¹⁵.

"The second mode of operation is to assume that the congress will be used to negotiate with the king without explaining the issue of his captivity and it will request satisfaction from him in three following cases: the seizure of Avignon, the rights lost by the princes of the empire and the guarantee of all treaties. Making an attempt on a treaty with the emperor from 1756 provides, actually, a sufficient pretext to put forward such demands. The king's reply and certainly violent conduct of the assembly will undoubtedly provide the powers with sufficient reason to come up with a request to improve the captivity of the king. France may also be attacked under the pretext that it has not given a satisfactory reply. In the latter case, however, it will be necessary to avoid mentioning the captivity of the king. Choosing that *modus operandi* the powers should, however, be forewarned that the conduct of the king will not be different than before. This means that he will do everything that the rebels will require him to do. The point is to enable him to declare war and to take all the necessary steps for its preparation to finally gain trust which will allow him to head his own army. If he can achieve this, he will be able to immediately announce his freedom. As a master of his own decisions, he will then be able to start negotiations

¹¹⁵ See *Mémoire sur les différentes manières d'opération pour le congrès*, an enclosure to Fersen's message of February 29, 1792, *ibidem*.

with the powers and, being sure of their support, impose the laws on his own kingdom. In this case, the representatives should receive the appropriate instruction and adapt their behaviour to the views approved by the king depending on the circumstances and the position in which he will be. For his part, the king will work with the congress and would not contradict the good will of the powers. The representatives should be forewarned not to, in any event, allow the princes to impose insinuations and demands, at least as long as they are not supported by the king. The Baron of Breteuil will be his sole representative. But if the leadership centre is needed, the King of Spain, as the head of the House of Bourbons, will be considered the leader of the league and all proposals will be made by his representative. This *modus operandi* is recommended by the King of France to all the powers. French monarch has also considered a third mode of operation [concerning a possible escape of Louis XVI from Paris – author's note]. However, this solution will not in any case be advised to other northern courts which have suggested it and which recognise the importance of the secret since it brings great benefits but also great dangers which are too well-known to go into the matter more deeply. If the plan was successful, the king would be the master of the situation; if it failed, there would always be a possibility of returning to the first indicated method and troops of various powers gathered on the border and ready for action would give the king great strength which he has not had since last June. It is believed, however, that neither of the two modes of operation with regard to the congress can be proposed until it receives the approval from the king to know from him what he wants, what his situation allows him to do and to what dangers he may be exposed"¹¹⁶.

Just a few days after sending that memorandum, however, Fersen began to lose hope that the congress proposed by him would ever be convened since on March 3, 1792 he noted in his diary that "Gazette Universelle" had published a letter of the emperor in which he officially recognised the new constitution and promised not to interfere in the internal affairs of France. The letter of Leopold II caused a great discontent of Fersen and rage of the French emigrants many of whom, fearing the confiscation of their property, decided to return to Paris¹¹⁷. On March 4, 1792 Hans Axel von Fersen wrote to Gustav III, however, that the attitude of the King of Prussia had filled him with some optimism for the future since Frederick William II began preparations for the expedition against France and suggested entrusting the Duke von Brunswick with the command of the combined Prussian and Austrian forces. According to Fersen, recent actions of the court of Berlin had had to impress the emperor and his ministers. The reports of the Marquis

¹¹⁶ See *ibidem*. See also Z. Anusik, *Kongres zbrojny...*, pp. 167–170.

¹¹⁷ See Fersen's Diary: Brussels, March 3, 1792, *Rescue the Queen*, p. 72; *Fersens dagbok*, p. 179.

of Bombelles from St. Petersburg, however, looked much worse. The marquis wrote to the Baron of Breteuil that he had been quite coldly received by the empress. Catherine II raised objections to the validity of the commissions issued by Louis XVI to the baron recognising it, just like a letter from Marie Antoinette (to which she attached absolutely no importance perceiving it only as a sign of an emotional trust of the queen), to be a result of the obtrusiveness and the consequence of the ambition of Breteuil who had long been intriguing against Mr de Calonne. Breteuil's intrigues were regarded by the empress as the only obstacle to the union and intimate trust which, in her opinion, should be present in the relations between the king and the princes. Bombelles was writing that the empress gave credence to slanderers accusing the Baron of Breteuil of a desire to establish two chambers and introduce a mixed government in France. Unsuccessfully, he made attempts to convince her that no one (due to the character or shared principles) was more distant from those ideas than Louis Auguste, Baron of Breteuil who had been long convinced of the need to restore the full extent of his previous power to the king. In the end, the empress blamed the Baron of Breteuil for a persistent deterioration of relations between the French royal couple and the princes. Thus, Fersen asked Gustav III to explain the empress the motives of the King and the Queen of France and act in defence of the Baron of Breteuil. He also claimed that Louis XVI would really like to collaborate with his brothers and their followers but he believed that it would be better to appeal for the support of the powers which activity would be more spectacular and would exert greater fear than the actions of the princes and emigrants who only irritated the public opinion with their insistence and the desire to take unlimited revenge expressed in all the writings and statements. He also explained to his lord that, as far as the commission of the Baron of Breteuil was concerned, it had been given to him after the King of France had decided to make changes in his policy and at a time when the baron was not in any correspondence with him. Apart from that, Breteuil knew the plans and wishes of Louis XVI best as he received all orders directly from him. Thus, Fersen encouraged Gustav III to still support the interests of the French royal couple at the court of St. Petersburg. What seemed very interesting, the Swedish diplomat in a fairly neutral tone told the king that Leopold II had decided to accept a sanction of a new constitution made by Louis XVI in September the previous year. The most important thing for him was to convince Gustav III that it was necessary as soon as possible to organise the transport of troops near the borders of France, determine the location of the commencement of the planned congress and write the text of the declaration about the captivity of the King of France¹¹⁸.

¹¹⁸ See H.A. v. Fersen to Gustav III, Brussels, March 4, 1792, RA, Gallica vol. 499; Z. Anusik, *Kongres zbrojny...*, pp. 170–172.

On March 7, 1792 Fersen wrote another message to Gustav III. He wrote that the court of Berlin had received a reply from Vienna to a proposal submitted to the emperor by Frederick William II. All the points had been accepted except for the paragraph on the issue of the announcement of the captivity of the king. The Austrian ministry had also put forward an objection to the concept of a full restoration of the former order in France considering the idea to be unrealistic and difficult to carry out. According to Leopold II, the restoration of freedom of the king would mean *de facto* the restoration of monarchy. Commenting on the attitude of the court of Vienna, Fersen said that the emperor had never wanted to go ahead and would not do anything if other powers did not change their point of view. He also wrote that if the court of Vienna accepted the literal meaning of that wording nothing else should be wished as the king, being fully free, would be able to form such a government as he deemed appropriate. Yet, the Swedish diplomat feared the ill will of the emperor who he still suspected of a desire to avoid taking active steps on France. He regarded the letter sent to Berlin as comparable to a speech of a lawyer attempting to avoid answering to the question. Fersen did not stop at accusing the emperor of a desire to establish such a government in France which would make it dependent on Austria. Thus, he tried to persuade Gustav III that the emperor's projects should be abolished through the joint action of the northern courts, the courts of Prussia and Spain. In his opinion, the princes could be useful if they put forward requests and proposals agreed upon with the King of France and the fellow powers. Fersen learnt from the Viscount of Caraman that the rumour had began to spread in Koblenz that the plan of military operations, developed in Berlin, provided the combination of the troops of Sweden, Russia and Hesse as well as German soldiers and princes with the army of the emigrants and entrusting the princes with the supreme command. The count doubted, in fact, that the plan would be approved by Gustav III and Catherine II but, just in case, he warned his lord against the disorder in the army of the emigrants. He also wrote that, in his opinion, Swedish, Russian and Hessian troops as well as those provided by the German princes should create separate corps¹¹⁹.

On March 8, 1792 the news of the unexpected death of the emperor reached Brussels. According to Fersen, the news had not made major impression on the Belgian citizens¹²⁰. In his message to Gustav III he wrote that the information about the death of Leopold II had been received with indifference by some and joy by others, except for the archduchess who had been very

¹¹⁹ See H.A. v. Fersen to Gustav III, Brussels, March 7, 1792, RA, Gallica vol. 499. The message reached Stockholm on March 29, 1792 and could not have, like any further ones, influenced any decisions taken at the court of Sweden.

¹²⁰ See Fersen's Diary: Brussels, March 8 and 9, 1792, *Rescue the Queen*, p. 73; *Fersens dagbok*, pp. 181–182.

attached to her brother. All in all, however, no one pitied him. In Belgium he had been neither feared nor loved while the French staying in the country showed almost obscene enjoyment from the event which Fersen considered inappropriate towards the memory of the man who had given them roof over their head. Yet, the emigrants' joy at the death of the emperor quickly gave way to the mood of uncertainty about the attitude of his successor. Fersen did not share those concerns and felt that a change at the imperial throne would be beneficial to the policy of the court of Vienna. In his opinion, the possibility of taking actions and the interests of Archduke Francis did not differ in any way from the capabilities and interests of his father. The Swedish diplomat predicted, however, that the impact of the court of Berlin on the young ruler would increase which would bring good results for France. The archduke would, in fact, have to seek support of Prussia if he wanted to keep the imperial dignity in his hands. Apart from what was commonly said, Francis did not share the views of his father and condemned his indecision and inaction in the French affairs. For that reason, Fersen did not hesitate to recognise the emperor's death as a beneficial event for the King of France. He also wrote that one of the most trusted men of archduke was Camille Joseph, Count of Lamberti, Lorrainer [actually, Luxembourg – author's note], definitely hostile concerning the French Revolution, who would certainly be able to convince the new ruler of Austria to his way of thinking. The same account of Fersen included information which made him reach the conclusion that on the day before Leopold II died he had changed his political system since during a conversation with the Count of Mercy-Argenteau on March 8 the Baron of Breteuil mentioned the need to propose a joint declaration of the powers on France. Mercy-Argenteau replied: "You do not need any more declarations. The emperor has finally changed his system". Moving vigorously and putting his hand on the hilt of his sword, he added: "This is what we need. The emperor is aware and he has already made up his mind. In a short time, there is no other way to save France and the whole Europe". Noting the statement of the Austrian diplomat, Fersen did not attach great significance to it. In his opinion, the only direct consequence of the death of Leopold II was the collapse of the idea of convocation of the congress of the powers in Vienna. The count seemed to be extremely contented with that development as the chances that the next congress would begin its deliberations in Aachen or Koblenz were increasing¹²¹.

On March 11, 1792 Hans Axel von Fersen wrote to Evert Taube that he had received the news from Bergstedt that Florida Blanca had fallen into disgrace and had been succeeded by Count Aranda. According to Fersen, it

¹²¹ See H.A. v. Fersen to Gustav III, Brussels, no date (ca. March 10, 1792), RA, Gallica vol. 499; Z. Anusik, *Kongres zbrojny...*, pp. 173–175.

was very positive news since he considered Aranda to be a resolute man and a great supporter of a strong monarchy¹²². Two days later the Swedish diplomat noted in his diary that Narbonne had lost the office of the Minister of War. Fersen knew the secrets of that event. He wrote that Narbonne had wanted to overthrow Bertrand de Molleville, the Minister of the Navy, but his intrigue ended in his own resigning from his position since Marshals Rochambeau and Lückner and General La Fayette had been against him. Also the Feuillant leaders: Duport, Barnave and Alexandre de Lameth required Narbonne's resignation. On the same day, Fersen learnt that Antoine Nicolas Delessart, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, had been arrested on the orders of the Legislative Assembly. He considered that event to be a great triumph of the Jacobins. However, he was contented with the changes on the French political scene since he foresaw that they would lead to chaos and the confusion in the country¹²³. On March 14, in a private letter to Gustav III, Fersen referred to the above-mentioned events sending the king a copy of a letter which he had received from the Swedish *chargé d'affaires* at Paris, Erik Bergstedt. Commenting on the reports from the capital of France, the count wrote that the fear had dictated Bergstedt the content of the message. However, he justified his friend stating that his sense of personal insecurity seemed fully justified. He did not like, however, the fact that Bergstedt had taken the way of thinking characteristic for the constitutional party, sharing its principles and fear of the victory of the Jacobins in Paris. According to Fersen, a divisions among the rebels could indeed prove to be very beneficial for the allied powers, making a future victory easier for them. The count only lamented that the King of France, abandoned, without the counsel or any support, would not be able to use those disputes properly¹²⁴.

On March 18, 1792 Fersen noted in his diary that he had received news from Paris that the Jacobins were planning to imprison the queen in a convent or send her to Orléans to confront her with Delessart. He did not, however, add any comment to the information. Noting nomination of Dumouriez to the post of the Minister of Foreign Affairs he stated shortly that he was a schemer who had formerly been employed in the secret diplomacy¹²⁵. On the same day, Hans Axel von Fersen decided to inform Gustav III that, knowing that Louis XVI intended to send his deputy to Catherine II, he had written to the representative of the princes, Count Esterhazy, advising him to leave

¹²² See H.A. v. Fersen to Evert Taube, Brussels, March 11, 1792, RA, Stafsundsarkivet, Evert Taubes Samling, vol. II.

¹²³ See Fersen's Diary: Brussels, March 13, 1792, *Rescue the Queen*, p. 74; *Fersens dagbok*, p. 183.

¹²⁴ See H.A. v. Fersen to Gustav III, Brussels, March 14, 1792, a private letter, RA, Gallica vol. 499. The letter must have been sent via a special courier since it reached Stockholm as early as on March 30, 1792.

¹²⁵ See Fersen's Diary: Brussels, March 18, 1792, *Rescue the Queen*, p. 74; *Fersens dagbok*, p. 184.

St. Petersburg. Without having any cipher he could not explain all the reasons that led him to take that step. He only wrote that the advice resulted from their old friendship and its purpose was to prevent trouble which the count would surely be in when he had to combine his devotion to the King and the Queen of France with the trust the princes had placed in him. At the same time, Fersen expressed hope that his letter would be delivered soon enough to let Esterhazy leave St. Petersburg before the Marquis of Bombelles got there. He also wrote, however, that if Esterhazy did not want to leave the Russian capital without explicit orders from the princes, it would be good for him to stay there just to hide the negotiations conducted by the Marquis of Bombelles and thus ensure the greater confidence of his mission. Fersen also tried to convince his lord that the Baron of Breteuil had known nothing of his letter to Esterhazy and when he had learnt about it he had referred to the ideas of the Swedish diplomat with an obvious disapproval. In the same message Count Fersen wrote that in Brussels they knew nothing either of the reasons for recalling Florida Blanca or whether his departure would result in any change in the policy of the court of Madrid towards France. Just in case, Fersen advised Louis XVI to write a personal letter to Count Aranda. He also seemed to be convinced that if the King of France decided to follow his advice, it should bring a very positive effect. Assessing the first steps of Leopold II's successor, Fersen wrote that the proceedings of the new King of Hungary demonstrated his strength of character and gave reason to believe that he would not continue his father's policy which boded well for the French affairs. Fersen attached to his message a copy of leaflets scattered among the soldiers and officers of the Brussels garrison. He claimed that so far it had not exerted much impression but if the authorities did not take harsh measures against the rebels, Belgium would be lost for Francis II¹²⁶.

In a detailed message of March 21, 1792 Hans Axel von Fersen depicted a picture of the current situation in France since from the letter of Evert Taube he had learnt that the king had badly received the memorial which Marie Antoinette had been forced to send to the emperor. The count was defending the queen saying that she had had no other choice but to sign up to the presented text. People who were surrounding the king and the queen were not pleased with half-measures any more. To deprive them of the opportunity to slander the king and to minimise any suspicion against him, it was necessary to accept their proposals and make the impression that they were in accordance with the wishes of the ruler. Presenting the current situation of the French royal couple, Fersen moved back to the time of the failed escape of Louis XVI in June 1791. He wrote that after arresting

¹²⁶ See H.A. v. Fersen to Gustav III, Brussels, March 18, 1792 and a text of Serment sur confederé enclosed to this message, RA, Gallica vol. 499.

the king and transporting him to Paris the republican party openly showed up aiming to overthrow the monarchy. The authors of the new constitution put forward the proposal to ally with the king in order to oppose intentions of the republicans. The king, abandoned by all, seeing no signs of action from the part of the powers and following the advice given by the Count of Mercy-Argenteau, decided to come to the agreement with them and to approve the constitution. Then, the new assembly was summoned. It was divided into two equally bad parties: those were the constitutionalists or the supporters of the former assembly and the Jacobins or republicans. There was no longer any third force. The first called themselves the friends of the king but they meant a constitutional king. They wanted order but only to implement their flawed constitution, secure personal safety and avoid punishment which they well deserved. The others were avowed enemies of the king's order and all power. They wanted to overthrow the constitution, the monarchy and the king seeking the republic or, better said, a total upheaval thanks to which they expected to find resources for their own enrichment, save their heads and avoid penalties for committed crimes. The king and the queen, seeing the chance to gain some benefits, decided to remain in alliance with the constitutional party and choose ministers indicated by it to the ministry while being convinced of their bad intentions and inability to govern on the basis of the provisions of that constitution. According to Fersen, the royal couple had a double benefit resulting from such proceedings. Firstly, it prevented unification of the two parties against the monarchy. Secondly, it deepened at the same time confusion and all sorts of a disorder in the kingdom, thus, preparing the ground for a vigorous operation which they were entitled to expect of the powers. In Fersen's opinion, those were the main reasons that determined the current behaviour of the king and the queen. He wrote further, however, that to achieve the purpose, the royal couple was forced to fully comply with the direction of the procedure indicated by the constitutionalists to dull their vigilance and prevent their agreement with the republicans. The king and the queen had to pretend that they trusted them, accepted the constitution and intended to maintain it. It was the only way to prevent unification of the parties and the fall of the monarchy¹²⁷.

Contrary to everything that might be thought about their conduct, the king and the queen had never relied on the rebels and did not give credence in their assurances of devotion to the throne. They never had doubts about the true motives which guided them. The royal couple had long been convinced of the need for external intervention. Only an extreme necessity had forced them to enter into agreements with such great criminals, which they perceived as a humiliation. Next, Fersen explained to the king that although

¹²⁷ See H.A. v. Fersen to Gustav III, Brussels, March 21, 1792, *ibidem*.

messieurs Barnave, Duport and Alexandre de Lameth were no longer the members of the assembly, they were leading the constitutional party and mediated between it and the king. They were the authors of the memorandum addressed to the emperor which sending had been long delayed under various pretexts. Since the queen did not maintain the direct correspondence with the emperor and it was also difficult to warn the Count of Mercy-Argenteau about everything. Yet, it was impossible to openly refuse to send that memorandum because it could have resulted in exposing the real intentions of the king and the queen. The queen expected to warn both, her brother and befriended courts that the memorandum was so far from true feelings of hers and the king that it should have been perceived only as a new evidence confirming their unfortunate position. The change which had occurred in the ministry was also a consequence of that plan of behaviour. Mr de Narbonne had been appointed to the War Department by the recommendation of the constitutionalists. Yet, he had abandoned their superiors and was intriguing against Mr Bertrand who also had been placed in the ministry by them, just as Mr Delessart. At the meeting on March 9, the Jacobins led to arresting Delessart while the constitutionalists persuaded the king to dismiss Louis, Count of Narbonne and nominate Pierre Marie, Marquis of Grave for the post of the Minister of War. In that way, from all the ministers devoted to the Jacobins only Bon Claude Cahier de Gréville remained in the council. Fersen did not know, however, what were the reasons for the nomination and party affiliation of Charles Dumouriez and Jean de Lacoste. In his opinion, the first one was a schemer employed formerly by the Count of Broglie to keep a secret correspondence with Louis XV and then allowed himself to spy on his superior. Because there were rumours that the two new ministers were the Jacobins Fersen feared the total triumph of the party which could entail unpredictable consequences¹²⁸.

In the same message, Hans Axel von Fersen also wrote that basing on the reports of the Marquis of Bombelles from St. Petersburg he was coming to the conclusion that Catherine II suspected the Baron of Breteuil of persuading the King of France to fully remove the princes from any impact on the policy. The letter from Marie Antoinette, however, should dispel those concerns since both, the king and the queen, counted on establishing a cooperation with the princes. The only reason for their current reserve was the indiscretion in the council of princes and among those who surrounded them. In her letter to the empress the queen had expressed the wish for the princes to act not alone but always in agreement with the powers. She also asked Catherine II to guide the princes not letting them know that it had been agreed with the king or made at his request. Perhaps the evidence of a great trust

¹²⁸ See *ibidem*.

gave the empress reason to suspect that the queen intended to reduce her impact on the development of future events and was planning to exclude the princes from future operations. Thus, Fersen asked Gustav III to refute those false beliefs and convince the empress about the real intentions of both, the Baron of Breteuil and the French royal couple. Finally, Hans Axel von Fersen put forward a proposal of the Swedish support to the concept of choosing the King of Hungary as the new emperor by the ministers of the electors of the Reich residing at the Parliament in Regensburg. That solution, known previously, seemed to him the most beneficial from the point of view of the interests of both, Gustav III and Louis XVI¹²⁹. Writing those words, Hans Axel von Fersen did not know yet that the situation at the court of Stockholm had meanwhile changed radically and the recipient of his letter would never have the opportunity to familiarise himself with its contents.

BETWEEN FEAR AND HOPE: THE ACTIONS OF CURT VON
STEDINGK IN ST. PETERSBURG IN THE PERIOD FROM THE END
OF OCTOBER 1791 UNTIL THE END OF MARCH 1792

Despite all the liking for Count Fersen, Gustav III did not fully share his views. Reading his messages from Brussels with a great interest, he paid much more attention, however, to what Curt von Stedingk wrote. From the moment of the signing of the Drottningholm treaty the Russian position had been much more important to the king. There was not the slightest doubt that the attitude of Catherine II would be a decisive factor of success or defeat of Swedish policy towards France. At the end of October 1791 the ambassador of Gustav III to the court of St. Petersburg did not know yet about the successful finalisation of the Stockholm talks with Stackelberg. Thus, he passed the news on a very good reception of Count Rumyantsev in Koblenz to the king. He also wrote that the princes had expressed their hope that Catherine II would issue a formal declaration stating that the court of St. Petersburg was interested in their cause and would do everything to restore order and monarchy in France. Curt von Stedingk was convinced that it was just the best time for the combined Swedish-Russian troops to land in France. He complained about the waste of time that could not be caught up later. Yet, he expressed hope that during the winter it would be possible to finish all the preparations for a joint expedition to rescue Louis XVI. What became an obstacle in achieving a future success was, however, the disagreement between Koblenz and the Tuileries. Therefore, Stedingk genuinely welcomed the fact that the empress dictated Count Esterhazy a letter

¹²⁹ See *ibidem*. A fragment of the same message see also *Rescue the Queen*, pp. 76–77.

to Marie Antoinette, trying to persuade the Queen of France to restore the agreement with the princes¹³⁰.

On November 4, 1791 a courier sent by Otto Magnus von Stackelberg from Stockholm reached St. Petersburg with the news of the signing of the Swedish-Russian treaty. That information was very well received at the court of Russia. The empress ratified the treaty on the same evening. Stedingk wrote on that occasion that Catherine II was looking forward to the reaction of the emperor and the King of Prussia in connection with the fact that Russia protected the case of the French emigrants. At the court of Russia it was expected that the example of the empress would be beneficial to both of those courts. Stedingk himself was not optimistic and believed that the fact that Vienna and Berlin had taken interest in French affairs would bring no good to the country. A few days later the ambassador wrote to Gustav III that the empress sent letters to Rumyantsev and to the Prince von Nassau-Siegen to Koblenz ordering them to take efforts to reconcile the princes with their royal brother. Stedingk and Esterhazy also wrote to Hans Axel von Fersen to convince him of the need to bring about an agreement between the French royal couple and the princes. The ambassador complained at the same time about the fact that such an obvious case had to be the subject of delicate and difficult negotiations¹³¹.

On December 2, 1791 Curt von Stedingk informed his lord, in turn, that basing on the messages coming from Vienna it could be assumed that the emperor did not intend to change his current policy towards France. In his opinion, Catherine II also feared open actions against the revolution not wanting to jeopardise the glory of her reign by taking part in a conflict that might not bring expected success. For that reason, the empress started no armaments claiming that it could wait until the spring and, besides that (in the case of unforeseen circumstances), Swedish troops could be put in a state of combat readiness within three weeks¹³². A week later Stedingk wrote that the empress focused all her attention on the reconciliation

¹³⁰ See C. v. Stedingk to Gustav III, St. Petersburg, October 10/21, 1791, RA, Muscovitica vol. 451; C. v. Stedingk to Gustav III, St. Petersburg, October 28, 1791, La Comtesse Brevern De la Gardie, *Un Ambassadeur de Suède a la cour de Catherine II. Field-Maréchal comte de Stedingk. Choix de dépêches diplomatiques, rapports secrets et lettres particulières de 1790 a 1796* [further on: *Stedingk et la cour de Catherine II*], vol. I, Stockholm 1919, p. 188.

¹³¹ See C. v. Stedingk to Gustav III, St. Petersburg, October 24/November 4 1791, a private letter, RA, Muscovitica vol. 451; as well as C. v. Stedingk to Gustav III, St. Petersburg, October 31/November 11, 1791, *ibidem*. See also *Stedingk et la cour de Catherine II*, p. 191.

¹³² See C. v. Stedingk to Gustav III, St. Petersburg, November 21/December 2, 1791, RA, Muscovitica vol. 451. See also G. Wrangel to C. v. Stedingk, Genoa, October 29, 1791, *ibidem*, Muscovitica vol. 522. In the letter sent later on by Stedingk to Stockholm a Swedish envoy to Italy informed the ambassador that the Dey of Algiers had declared war on Gustav III and ordered his consul to leave his country.

of Marie Antoinette with the princes. Messages from Rumyantsev from Koblenz had greatly pleased Catherine II as it could have been inferred that the work started by her was very promising. The same message of the Swedish ambassador included also a significant statement that the empress was ready to provide financial support to the French princes. She could also pay subsidies to Gustav III but she would definitely not send troops to France. Acknowledging the receipt of the royal orders of November 25, 1791, Stedingk was convinced that the empress would easily accept the idea of engaging the court of Madrid in the expedition against the French. Therefore, he decided to inform Count Ostermann about that case. He suggested, however, concealing all the king's plans concerning the imperial court since a vice-chancellor was a too close friend of Prince Fyodor N. Golitsyn, representing Russian interests in Vienna¹³³.

On December 16, 1791 Curt von Stedingk wrote to Gustav III that although he had not seen the messages sent to St. Petersburg from Vienna, he was very familiar with their contents since the emperor had not changed his way of thinking. It seemed, however, that he wanted to justify his inaction with a letter which he had received from the Queen of France who apparently wrote to him: "do not do anything and let me work". Stedingk assumed that the main objective of the court of Vienna was to gain time and use in maximum all the mistakes made by the French Legislative Assembly. Leopold II had reportedly also said that he did not have his hands tied so much not to be able to make a decision to use force if the queen's projects did not bring the expected result. Ludwig, Count von Cobenzl, an Austrian Ambassador to St. Petersburg, tried to impart a far greater extent to that last statement than it had been expressed in the messages from Vienna received by him. It could not, however, change the fact that the circles of Catherine II were very dissatisfied with the conduct of the emperor. Therefore, the Russian ministry began to seriously consider the proposal put forward some time before by the Elector of Trier that all the princes of the empire who had been harmed in their rights by the revolution should demand a joint guarantee and protection from the Empress of Russia in case the emperor refused it. Persuading the German rulers to officially put forward such a project would definitely aggravate problems of Leopold II and strengthen a position of Catherine II. The court of St. Petersburg did not intend, however, to oppress the ruler of Austria and, therefore, Ostermann suggested that the empress should convince the emperor that the only honourable solution for him would be taking all the princes of the Reich endangered by France under his care, to which he was obliged both, by law and tradition. Reflecting on

¹³³ See C. v. Stedingk to Gustav III, St. Petersburg, November 28/December 9, 1791, *ibidem*, *Muscovitica* vol. 451; *Stedingk et la cour de Catherine II*, p. 199.

the Russian policy towards Austria, Stedingk came to the conclusion that the empress was looking for methods to neutralise the emperor in case she failed to convince him to her way of thinking and if he did not decide to take active steps against revolutionary France. He was convinced that if that happened, Catherine II would be ready to finalise the started work only with the help of Gustav III¹³⁴.

A few days later the ambassador was persuading his lord that Catherine II, just like him, wanted to restore a strong royal power in France. For the time being, however, she would like to show Leopold II evidence that Marie Antoinette was not satisfied with his policy. Stedingk was convinced that there should not be great difficulties in obtaining appropriate documents. Actually, he wrote to Hans Axel von Fersen in that case asking him to persuade the queen to send a letter to Catherine II. The empress also wrote to Fersen asking him to persuade the King of France to abdicate if there was no other way to get Louis XVI out of the hands of demagogues. Catherine II told Stedingk on that occasion that the method seemed very good to her because it had proved successful in case of the previous King of Sweden. The ambassador replied that Adolf Frederick had had good advice and great support of his own people while the King of France had neither¹³⁵.

On January 20, 1792 Curt von Stedingk finally reported really good news to Gustav III. The previous week he had received a sum of 171,428 roubles from Ivan A. Ostermann, which was the first instalment of the Russian subsidies for the court of Stockholm under the Drottningholm treaty. The ambassador had also made the necessary arrangements to send the money to Sweden. He also wrote in the same message that the princes should be very pleased with the protection of the empress who was doing all she could to persuade Leopold II to change the opinion in their favour. Certain anxiety of Stedingk was aroused by the behaviour of an English envoy who seemed too favourably disposed towards the French demagogues. He apparently even said publicly, commenting the policy of his own court against France: "we are keeping a sword in its scabbard and it would be good if other powers did likewise". The same envoy had also entertained a French representative ignored at the court of St. Petersburg, Edmond Genet, with dinner. According to Stedingk, that behaviour was strongly contrary to the real feelings of Charles Whitworth who he had known for a long time as a refined person, wholeheartedly devoted to the Queen of France and those who were around her. Stedingk had even seen him crying when he spoke of the miseries of the queen. Therefore, the representative of Gustav III came to the conclusion that such statements and conduct were ordered to Whitworth by the court

¹³⁴ See C. v. Stedingk to Gustav III, St. Petersburg, December 5/16, 1791, RA, *Muscovitica* vol. 451.

¹³⁵ See C. v. Stedingk to Gustav III, St. Petersburg, December 10/21, 1791, *ibidem*.

of London. In St. Petersburg, however, there was a widespread belief that the English envoy would leave the capital of Russia in the spring under the pretext of taking the overdue holiday¹³⁶.

On February 4, 1792 Curt von Stedingk wrote to the king that on January 19 Marc Marie, Marquis of Bombelles had come to St. Petersburg. The ambassador did not think that he had been well received by the empress who seemed to be biased against everything that happened in the Tuileries. Besides, Bombelles was known for his friendship with the Baron of Breteuil which raised suspicions that he would try to act against the princes. Count Esterhazy talked with Stedingk about it. His loyal character and faithfulness to his employers made him notify the princes of the arrival of the new envoy of the royal couple in St. Petersburg. Fortunately, Esterhazy showed his message to Stedingk, thanks to which the latter could remove from it everything that could lead to the disagreement between Koblenz and the Tuileries. According to the wording of his instructions, the Marquis of Bombelles addressed Count Ostermann directly, handing him the letter of the Baron of Breteuil. He did not demand any private audience with the empress, which was a mistake as he could easily get that honour without arousing any suspicions as to the purpose of his visit. Long and frequent conferences which he held with the vice-chancellor attracted attention of both, foreign ministers and the public. On the other hand, Count Ostermann was flattered on trust put in him by the Baron of Breteuil and the Marquis of Bombelles. It made him very well disposed both, in relation to the negotiator and to the object of negotiations. Ostermann seemed to accede to the idea of organising an armed congress on France as he sought Stedingk's advice asking how to persuade the empress to approve of the idea. The ambassador, however, was sure that Catherine II would make a final decision about the matter only after a consultation with Gustav III. Further in his message, Stedingk wrote that there was a disagreement in the camp of emigrants in Koblenz and the princes lacked money since they had not received support either from the emperor or from the King of Naples. The ambassador also informed the king that Fersen had written to him that Marie Antoinette was doing everything to prevent the troops of the emigrants from entering France. Stedingk himself believed, however, that it was necessary to help emigrants and influence the emperor to change his policy towards France. The text of the quoted telegram also showed that the ambassador had gained full trust of both, the Marquis of Bombelles and Esterhazy. Yet, in rivalry between Breteuil and Calonne he definitely supported the trusted minister of Louis XVI. Stedingk finished his account with information that Count Fersen had written

¹³⁶ See C. v. Stedingk to Gustav III, St. Petersburg, January 9/20, 1792, *ibidem*, Muscovitica vol. 452.

to Esterhazy asking him to voluntarily leave St. Petersburg. The empress, however, ordered a representative of the princes to remain at his position¹³⁷. In a private letter written on the same day to King Stedingk voiced his suspicions against the emperor convincing Gustav III that if Leopold II decided to take actions against France, he would do it only in his own interest with a view of separation of the several provinces¹³⁸.

On February 10, 1792 Curt von Stedingk wrote to the king that the Marquis of Bombelles had made no progress in his negotiations. The empress feared negotiations with Louis XVI because of the weakness of his character and his indecisiveness. She knew, however, that the nobility and the princes were aiming to invade France. An idea of a military congress promoted by Marie Antoinette, Breteuil and Fersen met in St. Petersburg with a stiff resistance of Count Esterhazy. The empress also came to believe that the convocation of the congress would be just a waste of time. Stedingk also remarked on that occasion that Catherine II clearly favoured the party of the princes and emigrants considering them to be able to recover France and invoking the example of Henry IV who had begun his struggle for the throne in a similarly unfavourable circumstances. The ambassador also complained to his lord that he had to listen to mutual grievances and grudges of both, Bombelles and Esterhazy. In the same message, Stedingk informed Gustav III that he had not yet received a reply to the proposal passed to the Russians by the court of Spain which expressed a desire to accede to the Drottningholm treaty. The Russian ministry tried to find out from him what the position of the King of Sweden was in that matter but Stedingk said nothing, hiding behind the orders to keep the matter secret¹³⁹.

Two weeks later Curt von Stedingk wrote about the vicissitudes of Edmond Genet, still living in St. Petersburg, who was terribly bored, did not appear in any society and was forgotten even by his own Legislative Assembly. The ambassador noted that Genet had no possibility of seeing Count Ostermann because his house had been closed for him. In that way the representative of the Legislative had been *de facto* deprived of any opportunity to contact the ministry which did not receive anything from him and thus avoided explaining everything that Genet would like to communicate. The court of St. Petersburg omitted the name of the French envoy as well as the name of France in his almanac for the year 1792. In that way, not

¹³⁷ See C. v. Stedingk to Gustav III, St. Petersburg, January 24/February 4, 1792, *ibidem*. See also B. Dembiński, *op. cit.*, pp. 182–185, 213–214; Z. Anusik, *Kongres zbrojny...*, pp. 162–163.

¹³⁸ See C. v. Stedingk to Gustav III, St. Petersburg, February 4, 1792, a private letter, *Stedingk et la cour de Catherine II*, p. 224.

¹³⁹ See C. v. Stedingk to Gustav III, St. Petersburg, January 30/February 10, 1792, RA, Muscovitica vol. 452. As for resolving continual disagreements between the Marquis of Bombelles and Count Esterhazy by Stedingk see also N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, pp. 189–190.

demanding Genet's departure from their capital, the Russians had actually broken all relations with the revolutionary government¹⁴⁰.

On March 2, 1792 Stedingk informed Gustav III that he had eventually received the reply of the Russian ministry to his note on the proposal of Spain's accession to the Drottningholm treaty. Its conclusion was that the court of St. Petersburg did not want such a solution. Ostermann explained Stedingk that such an alliance would alarm England prompting a London court to seek a rapprochement with France, which the local National Assembly had also wished for a long time. Although Stedingk considered the concept of an Anglo-French alliance impossible to implement for a number of important reasons, he did not defend the proposals of the court of Madrid, not being sure what the position of Gustav III in the case was. Since, however, he felt that it was in the interest of both, Stockholm and St. Petersburg to win favour of Spain and not to discourage it with a formal refusal, he decided, together with Ostermann, that for the time being they would not say anything about that unpleasant case to a Spanish envoy to the Russian capital, Miguel de Gálvez¹⁴¹.

Until the beginning of March 1792 Curt von Stedingk reports did not include any concerns that the court of St. Petersburg might not meet its alliance obligations towards Sweden through the resignation from the participation in the expedition against revolutionary France. However, in a letter to the king of March 2 Stedingk reported on a significant fact of a frequent exchange of correspondence between the empress and the King of Prussia. In his opinion, Frederick William II was urging Catherine II to accede to his alliance with the emperor. French affairs were used by the court of Berlin only to hide its hostile intentions towards the Republic of Poland. The Swedish diplomat did not predict, however, a near agreement between Berlin and St. Petersburg. He claimed that, contrary to her hatred of the Poles and a dissatisfaction with their recent conduct, the empress would agree to the new partition of Poland only with the greatest difficulty and in defiance of herself. Revenge on the Poles would be undoubtedly sweet but danger of extending the power of the King of Prussia who would only make a profit on the new partition rose her serious concern. Characterising the current policy of the court of St. Petersburg towards the Republic of Poland, Stedingk wrote, in turn, that they would like (at least for the time being) only to intimidate the Poles, fuel their internal disagreement and hinder the implementation of their new constitution, making the country, if possible, "a stormy, impassable sea" which could serve as a barrier to three powers that surrounded it.

¹⁴⁰ See C. v. Stedingk to Gustav III, St. Petersburg, February 13/24, 1792, RA, *Muscovitica* vol. 452.

¹⁴¹ See C. v. Stedingk to Gustav III, St. Petersburg, February 20/March 2, 1792, *ibidem*. See also N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, pp. 212–215.

Thus, the ambassador thought that the recent actions of the court of Russia, which had expanded its army along the border with Poland from Kiev to Riga, entrusting Prince Nikolai Repnin with the command of the troops, should be watched through the prism of those objectives. He did not attach much importance to that matter not regarding a decision to intervene in Poland as sealed. In the same letter, Stedingk wrote about a very good reception of Stanisław Szczęśny Potocki and Seweryn Rzewuski in St. Petersburg. He also seemed to be anxious with the fact that during meetings with him the ministers of the empress had carefully avoided the discussion about the case of Poland. However, he assured Gustav III that he would follow everything referring to the Republic of Poland with scrupulous attention¹⁴².

What was particularly noteworthy was Stedingk's observation that the emperor and the King of Prussia did not wish for the presence of Russian troops in France and they would be glad to turn attention of Catherine II from the problems of Western Europe. Although the ambassador himself believed that the courts of Germany would not achieve the intended objectives, he drew attention of his lord to the fact that the empress had recently approached all that concerned the French affairs with a clear indifference. It was the impression of not only Stedingk, but also of the Prince von Nassau-Siegen and messieurs de Bombelles and Esterhazy. The Swedish diplomat suspected, however, that the reason of that change of Catherine II's disposition was an unexpected arrival of the Marquis of Bombelles, indiscreet love affairs of Mr Esterhazy and some expressions from the letter of the queen. In those circumstances the arrival of the Prince von Nassau to St Petersburg was considered by Stedingk a real boon. The prince smoothed conflicts between both French and did not do anything without the approval of the representative of Gustav III. Stedingk also learnt from the Prince von Nassau that the empress complained about Marie Antoinette, accusing her of a desire to ruin the party of the princes. Nassau also told Stedingk that the court of Vienna was plotting pernicious plans against France. According to the prince, the ministers of Frederick William II were as unfavourably disposed. Despite that, however, he managed to bargain an agreement of the King of Prussia for receiving French emigrants in Cleve and a subsidy of 500 thousand *livres* for the princes. In the same letter, Stedingk wrote that Berlin had decided to send the corps against France under the command of the Duke von Brunswick. He feared, however, that the King of France would have to sacrifice one or two provinces to restore the old system. He consoled himself, however, with a thought that the lost province could always be regained later while the new system would bring benefits only to the enemies of France

¹⁴² See C. v. Stedingk to Gustav III, St. Petersburg, March 2, 1792, a private letter, RA, Muscovitica vol. 452.

with the Austrian House at the top. Encouraging Gustav III to provide a quick assistance to Louis XVI, the ambassador warned him, however, that if he demanded the participation in the planned expedition of the Russian troops, the winter would pass before that issue was discussed in the letters sent between Stockholm and St. Petersburg¹⁴³.

On March 9, 1792 Curt von Stedingk wrote to Gustav III that he concluded from Oxenstierna's letters from Koblenz that the mission of the Marquis of Bombelles was unfavourably received in the camp of the princes. The ambassador expressed the regret that arguments between Calonne and Breteuil were still developing, preventing the emigrants from working out a common position on the future of France. In his opinion, Catherine II did not intend to facilitate an agreement between them, openly supporting the position of the princes and opposing the concepts promoted by a trusted minister of Louis XVI, the Baron of Breteuil. The conduct of St. Petersburg court in that matter did not win recognition in Stedingk's eyes since he was a strong supporter of the baron and defended his actions aiming at the restoration of a strong monarchy. Together with the Prince von Nassau-Siegen he also tried at all costs to lead to the agreement between the representatives of the two warring factions in the camp of the emigrants staying in St. Petersburg. In the postscript to the above message Stedingk informed the king that the Marquis of Bombelles was causing a lot of trouble in St. Petersburg. He also wrote that he was beginning to suspect that the Marshal of Castries had gone over to the side of enemies of the Baron of Breteuil. The ambassador also complained about the fact that he constantly had to manoeuvre between Scylla and Charybdis. The Prince von Nassau, the Marquis of Bombelles and Count Esterhazy gathered in his house only to argue with each other and all Stedingk's efforts to restore the agreement between them had been unsuccessful. Fights between the French had finally become so loud and annoying that the empress herself decided to join in the settlement of the dispute. Stedingk, however, did not expect objectivity from Catherine II who received many letters from Koblenz slandering the marquis. Further in his account, the ambassador wrote that the Baron of Breteuil had authorised Bombelles to give assurances that all expenses of the King of Prussia incurred in the interests of France would be returned. He also claimed that Leopold II insisted on the empress joining the Prussian-Austrian alliance in which he would also like to include Britain and Holland. According to the Swedish diplomat, Catherine II, however, was not going to accept the offer. In his opinion, the only possible solution for the court of St. Petersburg was to accept the offer of the court of Spain intending to accede to the Drottningholm treaty and combining Russian troops with the armies of Gustav III. Stedingk was

¹⁴³ See *ibidem*. See also *Stedingk et la cour de Catherine II*, p. 229 and fol.

a little concerned, however, about the fact that the Russians had reluctantly referred to a proposal of the court of Madrid for its accession to the Swedish-Russian alliance. Yet, little hope for the future resulted from the fact that Ostermann had again asked the ambassador to keep the position of the court of St. Petersburg secret from the Spanish envoy¹⁴⁴.

On March 15, 1792 the news of an unexpected death of Leopold II reached St. Petersburg. Stedingk predicted that the death of the emperor would cause stagnation in the French matters and significantly delay the commencement of war against France. On the other hand, he hoped that the event would not erase the case which Gustav III and Catherine II had undertaken to defend. In his opinion, the new King of Hungary was too interested in maintaining ties with Russia to disagree with the point of view of the empress on France. Pretending to the imperial crown, he could not take the liberty of refusing to help the German princes who were harmed by the revolution. Expressing a belief that the King of France would finally receive selfless help from the rulers of the North, Stedingk announced that he would demand explanations from the court of St. Petersburg while putting pressure on the ministers of Catherine II to force them to finally make a decision on a combination of Russian troops with the Swedish expeditionary corps¹⁴⁵. The next day, the ambassador wrote another letter to his lord. He informed Gustav III in it that he had received his orders of March 1 and 2, 1792. He immediately proceeded to carry out the king's orders firmly demanding the determination of a date of marching out and a number of Russian soldiers to take part in the expedition against France. In the same message, Stedingk wrote that the Marquis of Bouillé was not well seen in St. Petersburg like all those who were not marching under one banner with the princes. Therefore, Karl Heinrich, Prince von Nassau-Siegen, had taken efforts to take a supreme command over the intervention troops, trying to overshadow the marquis. Stedingk believed, however, that the presence of Gustav III in the ranks of the Swedish army would put an end to all the competition in that regard and Nassau would submit to the king without a murmur. Yet, he warned his lord that the real situation in Koblenz should be presented to the empress very carefully and gently, preventing her from suspecting the court of Stockholm of conspiracy with the Baron of Breteuil. On that occasion the ambassador mentioned that although he had not seen Catherine since the news of the emperor's death, he did not believe that she was moved a lot. The news was quite differently

¹⁴⁴ See C. v. Stedingk to Gustav III, St. Petersburg, February 27/March 9, 1792 and the apostille to this message, RA, Muscovitica vol. 452. See also *Stedingk et la cour de Catherine II*, pp. 234–235.

¹⁴⁵ See C. v. Stedingk to Gustav III, St. Petersburg, March 4/15, 1792, RA, Muscovitica vol. 452. On the issue of the influence of the emperor's death on the Russian policy in the spring of 1792 see B. Dembiński, *op. cit.*, p. 226.

received by Russian ministers about whom Stedingk wrote that he had always been to greater or smaller extent the Austrians devoted with all their heart to the ambassador who dined them. According to the Swedish diplomat, it was the cook of Ludwig, Count von Cobenzl who had overturned the projects of the court of Stockholm presented in the Russian ministry¹⁴⁶.

On March 26, 1792 Curt von Stedingk wrote that the previous day Catherine II had received the news of an attempt against life of Gustav III. The empress was shocked with it. The Prince von Nassau told the ambassador that since the death of Joseph II he had not seen her in such a state. Stedingk himself, actually, was the last to learn about the whole thing prepared to receive the terrible news by the Ambassador of Austria. The Swedish mission in St. Petersburg transformed into a real house of pain. The news of the attempt against the life of the King of Sweden tremendously moved the Marquis of Bombelles and Count Esterhazy. The Prince von Nassau was extremely depressed and sought solace in conversations with Stedingk. Eventually, Platon Zubov personally handed the ambassador condolences of the empress, confirming on that occasion the willingness to fulfil all Russian alliance obligations towards Sweden. That message undoubtedly would make the King of Sweden extremely contented. However, Gustav III had never heard of a harrowing impression that the attempt on his life made at the court of St. Petersburg. Stedingk's letter reached Stockholm only on April 4, 1792¹⁴⁷.

A FAILED LEADER OF A MONARCHICAL CRUSADE: GUSTAV III IN THE LAST MONTHS OF HIS LIFE AND REIGN

Signing the Drottningholm treaty marked an important turning point in the history of Swedish policy towards France. Gustav III was convinced that with the help of Russia he could finally convince other rulers of the need to intervene in favour of Louis XVI. As early as October 28, 1791 the King of Sweden wrote to Catherine II expressing joy of the fact of finalising negotiations of the alliance and telling her about his recent moves. In that letter he wrote that he had sent Hans Axel von Fersen to Brussels, ordering him to take action to restore the old prerogatives of the French crown. At the same time, however, he assured the empress that the instructions of his deputy did not include any phrasing against the French princes. On the same occasion, Gustav III recalled his idea that Monsieur could immediately take the title of regent. He also praised the empress's accrediting Rumyantsev alongside the princes in Koblenz and her sending personal letters to Leopold II and Frederick William II. He believed that all of those moves of the Russian

¹⁴⁶ See C. v. Stedingk to Gustav III, St. Petersburg, March 5/16, 1792, RA, *Muscovitica* vol. 452.

¹⁴⁷ See C. v. Stedingk to Gustav III, St. Petersburg, March 15/26, 1792, *ibidem*.

ruler should help their common cause. For his part the king, in turn, wrote to Charles IV trying to engage Spain in joint actions against the French rebels. Further in his letter Gustav III wrote that he would be willing to act in the spring. He also urged Catherine II to make a declaration that she intended to take action in favour of Louis XVI which should force other rulers to follow the example of the court of St. Petersburg. Trying to agree with the empress on the proceedings as for the response to a letter of Louis XVI with the notification of the adoption of a new constitution, the king put forward a proposal to recall a Russian envoy from Paris. He also announced sending his own envoy to Koblenz. Gustav III finished his letter to the empress expressing his concern about the safety of the foreign ministers accredited to the capital (since there were no French ministers either in Stockholm or St. Petersburg against whom reprisals could be possibly taken) and a promise to consult all his further actions with Catherine II¹⁴⁸. Gustav III attached a memorandum on the landing in Normandy to the letter to the empress. It also included a map drawn by Captain Fieandt indicating the route from Le Havre to Paris. The actions in Normandy would, according to the king, involve 11 line ships, seven frigates, three brigs, two cutters, 25 lifeboats equipped with one 24-pounder cannon and 40 assault boats, each of which could accommodate 100 people. The fleet was to redeploy 16 thousand infantry soldiers and 2,4 thousand cavalymen to France. With such forces Gustav III planned to occupy Paris and restore the old order in France¹⁴⁹.

At the beginning of November 1791 Gustav III wrote to Christian Ehrenfried von Carisien in Berlin and Johan Fredrik von Nolcken in Vienna ordering them to make an effort to win both courts to the concept of the cooperation between all European monarchs on France. However, while persuading Frederick William II seemed possible to him, he was much more sceptical about the cooperation with Leopold II. At the same time (November 4) Gustav III wrote to Curt von Stedingk that the news from Madrid filled him with optimism and made him believe in the fact that Spain decided to take active steps in the restoration of the old order in France. In relation to the emperor the king was still, however, very wary and suspected him of reluctance to the efforts taken by other courts. The best evidence confirming those fears was the unfavourable reception in Vienna of information about accrediting Rummyantsev and Oxenstierna alongside the princes in Koblenz¹⁵⁰. A few days

¹⁴⁸ See Gustav III to Catherine II, Stockholm, October 28, 1791, N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, pp. 227–230.

¹⁴⁹ For the full text of the memorandum see L. Manderström, *Om Gustaf III:s yttre politik under de två senaste åren af dess regering*, Stockholm 1859, an enclosure Q, p. 74; N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, vol. I, Lund 1885, pp. 139–140.

¹⁵⁰ See N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 149; Gustav III to C. v. Stedingk, Drottningholm, November 4, 1791, apostille, RA, Muscovitica vol. 489.

later Gustav III showed Catherine II a plan of landing of the Swedish army in Normandy convincing her at the same time of the necessity of the cooperation between Russia, Sweden, Austria, Prussia, Spain and Sardinia on restoration of the old order in France¹⁵¹.

In a letter to Curt von Stedingk written on November 25, 1791 Gustav III assured his ambassador to the court of the Empress of Russia that everything indicated that Spain would decide to accede to the anti-French coalition in the nearest future since Johan Fredrik von Nolcken was reporting from Vienna that Andrei K. Razumovsky, a Russian representative to the imperial court, supported the intervention of the powers in defence of Louis XVI. Gustav III wrote on the same day to his representative to the capital of Austria asking him, together with Russian and Spanish envoys, to try to influence the emperor to give up his neutrality and join actively the work of saving the monarchy in France¹⁵².

On November 30, 1791 a letter of the Baron of Breteuil reached Drottningholm. A trusted minister of Louis XVI wrote in it that he was still waiting for the emperor's final decision on sanctioning a new constitution by the ruler of France. Justifying a decision of his lord in that matter, Breteuil wrote that Louis XVI was held by the rebels in a total lack of knowledge as of what to expect from the powers. In that awful position, without any advice or support, he considered it necessary to accept the constitution just to make his good will credible, gain trust of the people, calm them down and thus gain the opportunity to act more easily. Because the queen was also convinced that in the near future they could not expect any foreign reinforcements, Louis XVI decided that he would not refuse to issue declarations and guarantees requested by the rebels and that he would act in accordance with the principles of the new constitution. Breteuil was persuading Gustav III that the king was aware of all the horror of his position and would like to change it but in the present circumstances he could not do anything. For that reason, he limited his demands to the emperor and requested him only for a convocation of the congress as soon as possible. The king asked Leopold II to persuade other powers to participate in the congress, determine a future meeting place and lead to the immediate appointment of all the delegates. The congress was to be convened under a pretext of a matter of Avignon and the damage caused in Alsace to the German princes. During the congress Louis XVI intended to play the role of a mediator between the powers and his

¹⁵¹ See Gustav III to Catherine II, Drottningholm, November 21, 1791, N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 140.

¹⁵² See Gustav III to C. v. Stedingk, Drottningholm, November 25, 1791, RA, *Muscovitica* vol. 489. See also N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 149. A Spanish diplomat, mentioned in Gustav III's letter, was an Ambassador of the Catholic King to Vienna, José Augustin Llano y de la Quadra, Marquis of Llano. See *Repertorium*, p. 430.

people. In that way, without risk to himself and his family, he expected to find the opportunity to interact with the powers on the restoration of the *ancien régime*. Further in his letter the baron tried to convince Gustav III of the need to subordinate the French princes to the will and beliefs of Louis XVI. He also suggested that the King of Sweden mediate in agreement between the ruler of France and his brothers. What Breteuil meant, however, was letting the Tuileries court secretly guide the actions of the emigrants since he wrote that the princes should know nothing about the agreement concluded between the ruler of France and the King of Sweden and they should be convinced that all the guidelines referring to their conduct were coming exclusively from Gustav III. Complaining about the indifference of the emperor towards the fate of the French royal family, Breteuil feared that Leopold II would also reject the idea of the convocation of the congress. Therefore, he urged Gustav III, together with Russia and Prussia, to exert an appropriate pressure on the emperor to make him change his former conduct. He also believed that the future league had to include Spain which ruler should take the formal leadership. Ensuring Gustav III that Louis XVI would compensate for all the expenses incurred in his favour by the Swedish treasure, Breteuil at all costs, however, tried to dissuade the king from supporting the idea of proclaiming the Count of Provence a regent. He argued that the idea was opposed by both, Louis XVI and the King of Spain as well as the emperor who would never let it happen. In the end, Breteuil expressed the wish that the King of Sweden and the Empress of Russia shared the views of other courts on that issue and withdrew their support for princes' efforts to establish the regency. He also promised Gustav III that France would never forget what he had done for its king and its strengths and resources would be put at his disposal as soon as Louis XVI regained the lost power¹⁵³.

A letter of the Baron of Breteuil undoubtedly influenced the further conduct of Gustav III, although the king did not fully agree with the minister of Louis XVI. Yet, under the influence of the baron's insistence, he decided to write to Leopold II about the issue of the congress desired by the Tuileries court. From the beginning, however, the ruler of Sweden was convinced that the idea would not be approved of by the court of Vienna. For that reason, he decided to make efforts to expand the Drottningholm treaty by including Spain. He believed that the best way to help Louis XVI was to create a league of European countries with the King of Spain (recognised in Stockholm as the head of the Bourbons) as the leader. The leadership of Charles IV would, however, be purely formal since the troops of the league were to be

¹⁵³ See L.A. de Breteuil to Gustav III, Brussels, November 11, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 524. The same letter see M. Price, *op. cit.*, pp. 458–459. See also *Gustav III i baron de Breteuil. Nieznana karta z dziejów sekretnej dyplomacji w latach 1790–1792*, "Zapiski Historyczne", vol. LXIX, 2004, issue 2–3, pp. 37–39.

led personally by Gustav III. For that reason the court of Stockholm did not ignore the attitude of Leopold II and at all costs tried to convince him of the necessity of taking an active action against the rebellious subjects of the King of France. Swedish diplomacy also took efforts to agree on a plan of the future operations against France with the emperor. All those measures, however, did not bring the expected results and the Swedish offers were still very coldly perceived at the court of Vienna which did not want the troops of Gustav III to be present in Western Europe¹⁵⁴. In order to exacerbate the situation in relations with revolutionary France, Gustav III decided to recall Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein from Paris. On December 16, 1791 orders were prepared in Stockholm requiring the ambassador to leave the French capital within 14 days of receiving the message. At the same time, Staël was informed that his former duties would be taken over by Erik Bergstedt¹⁵⁵.

In a letter to the brothers of Louis XVI, written on December 17, 1791, Gustav III presented the principles of his policy towards contemporary France. He began by informing the princes that he had received Jean François, Baron of Escars in Stockholm, recognising him as the sole representative of the interests of France to his court. Further he stated that the main purpose of his actions would be leading to expanding the Swedish-Russian alliance with Spain. The king, however, was anxious about the attitude of both, Louis XVI and the emperor. However, as the season was inappropriate to take any actions, Gustav III expressed his hope that by the spring all the difficulties would be resolved. At the same time, he urged his correspondents to remain calm and refrain from any risky steps since he argued that it was necessary to patiently wait until the end of winter, trying to lull vigilance of the assembly so that it would not have time to prepare an appropriate defence. The king's letter also included a suggestion that the secret agents of the princes should try to provoke the assembly to hostile speeches against the Reich which should force both, Leopold II and other German princes to take actions. Persuading brothers of Louis XVI that Frederick William II was very favourably disposed towards their interests, Gustav III required them at the same time to keep everything in the innermost secret, authorising only the Bishop of Arras and Charles de Calonne to familiarise with the content of his letter. Undoubtedly influenced by the insistence of the Baron of Breteuil, Gustav III made an attempt to mediate in reaching the agreement between the princes and Marie Antoinette, convincing his correspondents

¹⁵⁴ See N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 151, 168–170, 205.

¹⁵⁵ See *ibidem*, vol. II, pp. 158–159; Z. Anusik, *Gustaw III i baron...*, p. 42. A few days later Gustav III announced his decision to C.A. Ehrensvärd in Madrid and C. v. Stedingk in St. Petersburg. He wrote in his message that Catherine II had also taken a decision to recall Simolin from Paris. See Gustav III to C.A. Ehrensvärd, Stockholm, December 22, 1791 (a copy), RA, Muscovitica vol. 489.

that it was necessary in order to save France. He recommended refraining from separate military operations. At the end of his letter the king said that he would like to see Charles IV at the head of the future anti-French league in order to deprive the emperor of the leadership. The King of Spain had already promised his financial support to the projects of the court of Sweden which would allow to begin military operations in the spring. According to Gustav III, his fleet and troops were already ready for an action but purposely slowed down all the preparations a little bit to lull the vigilance of the French assembly. The king also informed the princes that as soon as Staël left Paris for Copet, he would send to the capital of France an intact package of correspondence (including the notification of the new French constitution) submitted to him by the Chevalier de Gaussen¹⁵⁶.

The situation of the King of Sweden, however, was not as clear as he tried to present to the French princes as for a long time Gustav III had been struggling with the growing internal opposition and a constant lack of money inclined him to the idea of the convocation of the *Riksdag*. The king hoped that the estates would adopt extraordinary taxes which could be used for financing expeditions against revolutionary France. He feared, however, a serious opposition of representatives of the nobility. Therefore, he decided to meet with the estates not in Stockholm but in the provinces. He chose the town of Gävle. The notice of the convocation of the Estate Assembly in that town was published on December 20, 1791. Fearing riots, the king surrounded the place of the future *Riksdag* with significant armed forces and the troops of the bourgeois-peasant militia. He was anxiously awaiting the meeting with the representation of his subjects¹⁵⁷.

Getting ready to leave the capital, he did not lose the French matters of his sight. At the end of December 1791 the King of Sweden made another attempt to persuade Frederick William II that Louis XVI was not truly free so the European rulers should make joint interventions in the internal affairs of France. On the same occasion, he wrote to the King of Prussia that the emperor either did not know or presented in a false light the true intentions of the King of France, who was only apparently cooperating with the rebels and actually expected help from other kings. In his next letter to the King of Prussia written on January 13, 1792 Gustav III stated that the letter of Marie Antoinette should finally convince Frederick William II of the true attitude of Louis XVI waiting for the Prussian help. At the same

¹⁵⁶ See Gustav III to Louis, Count of Provence and Charles, Count of Artois, Stockholm, December 17, 1791, N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 236–240.

¹⁵⁷ See A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige...*, p. 302; N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 160–162; R.N. Bain, *Gustav III and his Contemporaries 1746–1792. An Overlooked Chapter of Eighteenth Century History*, vol. II, London 1894, pp. 160–161.

time he warned his correspondent not to send the Count of Ségur to Berlin describing him as an ingrate who was one of the first to declare against the royal couple. Urging Frederick William II to defend the King of France in the name of solidarity of all rulers, he assured him at the same time that he had been authorised by Louis XVI to act on behalf of the court of Berlin and other courts which he intended to engage in the rescue of the French monarchy¹⁵⁸.

In mid-January 1792 Gustav III, however, seemed strongly discouraged by the difficulties which he had encountered on his way to form the anti-French league. He was irritated by both, the weakness and inconsistency of Louis XVI and the attitude of other European courts. At the same time, the king wrote to Evert Taube: "Unfortunately! What a weak ruler I would like to help! I am not saying anything more for fear of saying too much. But for the fact that I have never backed out from my earlier intentions and for my relation with the empress, I would be willing to give up the whole thing and the faint-hearted rulers who do not know whether to die or to ally"¹⁵⁹. It seems, however, that the reason of the king's bad mood could also be connected with the difficulties piled against him by internal opposition. On January 13, 1792 Chevalier Jean de Gaussen wrote to Delessart: "The people of Sweden are generally very opposed to the idea of the king who intends to demand money from them to set off to distant countries and march there at the head of his troops, joining the venture which will inevitably lead to pulling Sweden in the abyss of such disasters which it will never be able to get out of". Also in his subsequent January messages the French *chargé d'affaires* at Stockholm wrote about the problems of Gustav III with raising the necessary sums. However, he warned his minister that if the king collected adequate financial resources, he would spend them on carrying out his hostile intentions against France¹⁶⁰. In mid-January 1792 Gustav III received two letters which were written to him in late December 1791 by Louis, Count of Provence and Charles, Count of Artois. In the first of them brothers of Louis XVI complained about the disregard of their problems by the emperor, slowly starting to believe that he would take charge of the proceedings of all European offices. The two princes were by no means scared of the reluctance of Leopold II.

¹⁵⁸ See Gustav III to Frederick William II, Stockholm, December 23, 1791 and January 13, 1792; N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 157, 240–242. At this point it is also worth mentioning that on January 15, 1792 Gustav III sent orders to C.E. v. Carisien, requesting him to make efforts to engage the court of Berlin in the joint action of the powers against the revolutionary France. See *ibidem*, p. 196.

¹⁵⁹ See Gustav III to E. Taube, Stockholm, January 13, 1792, RA, Stafsundsarkivet, Evert Taubes Samling, vol. I; Z. Anusik, *Gustav III i baron...*, pp. 45–46.

¹⁶⁰ See J. de Gaussen to E. Delessart, Stockholm, January 13, 1792 as cited in A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige...*, p. 303. See also *ibidem*, p. 304.

They were convinced that Gustav III, Catherine II and the kings of Spain and Naples would soon manage to unite all true friends of France which would remove all the obstacles on the way to the triumph of the common cause of all rulers. In the same letter the brothers of Louis XVI assured the King of Sweden that the Baron of Escars would inform him about all their plans and projects. They also informed him about the commencement of preparations for providing an adequate support to Swedish troops which would land on the shores of Normandy. In their second letter written on December 24, 1791 Louis, Count of Provence and Charles, Count of Artois, in turn, assured the king that they regularly informed Baron Oxenstierna about all their actions, not hiding anything from him because they knew that they would always be able to count on favour and support of his lord. The princes, however, asked Gustav III not to try to personally control their behaviour. Not wanting to develop that awkward thread, they confined themselves to saying that the Baron of Escars and Baron Oxenstierna were their trusted confidants and, if necessary, would be able to explain any doubts on that matter to the king¹⁶¹.

Responding to the letter of princes on January 20, 1792, Gustav III praised them for publishing the letters to Louis XVI. He warned them, however, not to publish letters to the emperor because it could put him off their case. He also advised the princes to make efforts to win friendship of Leopold II, who they should not underestimate under any circumstances because he was the ruler having 200 thousand soldiers at his disposal. In reference to the request to refrain from wanting to control all the actions of the princes, Gustav III told his correspondents that he had always spoken to them honestly and if they had not liked his advice they should have openly told him earlier since it would not have changed his friendly attitude to them. In the same letter, the king wrote that the actions of the assembly, which were exacerbating the conflict with the emperor, should well serve the common cause since if peace was broken, the German princes could finally act. And although steps had been taken by the French rebels rather late, Gustav III was convinced that nothing could turn the Legislative back from the chosen path. Therefore, he decided to accredit Oxenstierna alongside the Elector of Trier and sent him orders to try to convince the archbishop of the need to maintain an inflexible attitude towards the French demands. The king also wrote that he knew about the plight of French emigrants but he asked the princes to refrain from any action because even if they had to leave the lands of the Elector of Trier, they would always find refuge with other princes. The Swedish ruler himself offered hospitality in Pomerania to the brothers of Louis XVI.

¹⁶¹ See Louis, Count of Provence and Charles, Count of Artois to Gustav III, Koblenz, December 18 and 24, 1791, RA, Gallica vol. 521.

He also wrote that he would be glad to invite them to Stockholm but he realised that they did not want to leave their companions in misery¹⁶².

Exactly at the same time Gustav III wrote to Hans Axel von Fersen asking him to tell the Baron of Breteuil that he expected no good results from the planned congress which would lead to quarrels among the European rulers rather than to their unification. The king was indeed convinced that the emperor would refuse his consent to convocation. He pinned great hopes on the policy of the French Legislative Assembly which intended simply to unleash an armed conflict. For that reason, he insisted on his envoy to Brussels to lead to the departure of Louis XVI from Paris as soon as possible. On the same day, January 20, 1792, Ulric Gustaf Franc wrote to Johan Fredrik von Nolcken that the court of Stockholm would not accept the attitude of the emperor who did not want to accept the proceedings of Sweden, Russia and Spain which had jointly refused to recognise the freedom of the King of France. In connection with the above-mentioned observation, the Secretary of State had raised the question to whom a joint note of the European rulers should be delivered, sending on which was required by the court of Vienna. Not to the king, because he was not a master of himself. Not to the assembly, because it would mean the acceptance of its authority and it was not the right thing to negotiate with the rebels either. Writing further that under no circumstances should the power of Louis XVI be restored through negotiations, as the ministers of the emperor would like, Franc assured Nolcken at the same time that the Northern courts, namely Russia and Sweden, would never give up the adopted system and, therefore, would support the proposal put forward by the French royal couple to convene a military congress somewhere near Aachen. Apparently, not having much hope for convincing the emperor of the feasibility of the project, Gustav III took the last attempt to reach a compromise with the court of Vienna. The importance which the king attached to that issue is evident because of the fact of sending a copy of the quoted message to Curt von Stedingk in St. Petersburg. Since at the same time rumours reached Stockholm that Esterhazy might be recalled from St. Petersburg, on January 20, 1792 Gustav III wrote to Carl Gustaf Oxenstierna urging him to do his best to stop the count in the capital of Russia as otherwise the emigrants could lose everything that they had gained so far from Catherine II¹⁶³.

¹⁶² See Gustav III to Louis, Count of Provence and Charles, Count of Artois, Haga Palace, January 20, 1792; N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 242–244. On the accreditation of C.G. Oxenstierna alongside the Elector of Trier see also *ibidem*, pp. 195–196.

¹⁶³ See Gustav III to H.A. v. Fersen, Haga palace, January 20, 1792, RA, Stafsundsarkivet, Hans Axel v. Fersens Samling, vol. 11; U.G. Franc to J.F. v. Nolcken, Stockholm, January 20, 1792, apostille (a copy), *ibidem*, Muscovitica vol. 490. See also N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 201–202; Z. Anusik, *Gustaw III i baron...*, pp. 46–47.

Probably at the same time Gustav III received another letter from the Baron of Breteuil from Brussels. The baron reminded the king that the French royal couple went on insisting on the idea of the convocation of the military congress on the French border and, therefore, repeated their request for the support of the proposal by the ruler of Sweden at other courts. Louis XVI was convinced that the congress would facilitate his further action and would lead to the strengthening of his position in the country. Thus, later in his letter Breteuil tried to gently dissuade Gustav III from an armed intervention in France attempting to direct all his attention and energy to the issue of the organisation of the congress. Clarifying the issue of the relation between the King of France and the German princes, the baron wrote that the ruler had to proceed very subtly because of the hostility of the rebels against the empire. He also argued that the electors would proceed wisely and prudently without giving the enemy any chance to act hostilely against them since the rebels were merely waiting for a random excuse to invade their estates. The king would not have any possibility to stop their revenge for the fact that the German princes had given shelter to the French emigrants. The baron also claimed that the rebels were hoping that their impact on the princes would not meet with any response from the powers and they intended to attack Germany with a cry of "peace be with huts, war be in palaces". He explained Gustav III that the whole situation made Louis XVI take far-reaching precautions. Therefore, the King of France decided to accept the decision of the assembly to send an ultimatum to Koblenz with a request to dissolve the troops created there by the French emigrants. Further decisions of the king were to depend on the content of a reply of the Elector of Trier. According to the baron, the French royal couple, however, was convinced that the emigrants should leave clerical electorates. Despite sympathy for their unfortunate compatriots, Breteuil fully shared that view. He also predicted that in his reply to the letter of the Elector of Trier the emperor would advise the archbishop to adopt French requests and remove emigrants' military units from his territory. That move should satisfy the assembly for the time being. In the same letter Breteuil told Gustav III that for the time being Louis XVI did not have any specified action plan waiting for further developments and intending to proceed according to the changing circumstances. Putting forward further accusations against the brothers of Louis XVI, the baron finally mentioned that the Marquis of Bombelles, sent by him, had brought private letters of Marie Antoinette to Catherine II to St. Petersburg¹⁶⁴. Since the ideas of the Baron of Breteuil did not particularly appeal to the king and, besides, he was preoccupied with the session of the *Riksdag* in Gävle,

¹⁶⁴ See L.A. de Breteuil to Gustav III, Brussels, January 1, 1792, RA, Gallica vol. 524. For the same letter see also M. Price, *op cit.*, pp. 459–462; Z. Anusik, *Gustav III i baron...*, pp. 47–48.

the baron waited for a response from Stockholm for the next few weeks. Gustav III, however, found time to write to Gustaf Adam von Nolcken in London on January 30, 1792 recommending him to follow with the utmost attention the actions of Charles Maurice de Talleyrand, sent by the Legislative Assembly on a special mission to the court of England¹⁶⁵.

Closely observing developments in Western Europe, Gustav III did not lose the problems of Central and Eastern Europe of his sight. And at the beginning of 1792 changes of the extreme gravity occurred there. On January 9 Russia concluded a final peace treaty with Turkey in Iași (based on treaty preliminaries signed on August 11, 1791 in Galati). The end of the Turkish war meant that the empress regained full freedom of movement and Stockholm (where Gustav III still did not lose the hope for getting the crown after Stanisław August) began to fear that Catherine II would begin preparations for the intervention in Poland¹⁶⁶. At the beginning of February 1792 the empress showed the King of Sweden her plan of operations against the revolutionary France. According to Catherine II's project, the powers interested in restoring the old order in that country should primarily secure funds for arming the troops of the French emigrants. The Austrian army was to be concentrated in Belgium and in Breisgau and the King of Prussia was to strengthen his armed forces in the Rhineland. The rulers of Spain and Sardinia were to proceed in a similar way moving their troops towards the French borders. The allied forces were, however, to limit themselves simply to the military demonstration, protecting at the same time the troops of the French emigrants who were the only ones to cross the border. The plan prepared by the court of St. Petersburg also assumed the convocation of the military congress of the powers on France. Yet, it did not provide sending Russian soldiers to the country. It also aimed at minimising the participation of Sweden in the whole enterprise¹⁶⁷.

¹⁶⁵ See N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 198–199.

¹⁶⁶ N. Åkeson argued that since the end of the Russo-Turkish war Catherine II did everything to involve other European countries in the war against France just to keep her hands free in connection with the Republic of Poland. See *idem*, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 202. See also C.T. Odhner, *op. cit.*, pp. 57–58. B. Dembiński had a similar opinion claiming that from the very beginning Catherine II only pretended to be interested in the matters of revolutionary France while she really thought about taking revenge on Poland and the Poles. See *idem*, *op. cit.*, pp. 141, 159 and fol., 171 and fol., 177–178. In reality, however, the case was a bit more complicated and it seems that the final decision of the court of St. Petersburg to start the intervention in Poland was made only at the turn of March and April 1792. See Z. Anusik, *Miedzy Warszawa, Sztokholm i Petersburgiem. Geneza rosyjskiej interwencji w Polsce w 1792 roku w swietle korespondencji ambasadora szwedzkiego w Petersburgu – Curta von Stedingka*, in: *Przełomy w historii. XVI Powszechny Zjazd Historyków Polskich (Wrocław 15–18 września 1999 roku)*. Pamiętnik, vol. II, part 1, Toruń 2000, pp. 255–276.

¹⁶⁷ See N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 203–204. In reference to the proposed detailed solutions, the plan of Catherine II presented in her letter to Gustav III of January 20, 1792 was as

Gustav III, discontented with that turn of events, began to suspect Catherine II of a desire to withdraw from active policy towards France. Thus, on February 6, 1792 he ordered Curt von Stedingk to find out if the empress did not intend to interfere in the internal affairs of the Republic of Poland. The king thought that if those were his cousin's true intentions, that move would cause a change in her policy towards France to a greater or smaller extent. The intervention in Poland would not let her deal with promoting the common cause of all the monarchs so vigorously as before. Gustav III predicted dire consequences of such a decision of Catherine II. In his opinion, other courts without the support of Russia could also come up with the idea of withdrawing from the intention of intervening in the internal affairs of France¹⁶⁸.

follows: 1. The allied powers would ensure a financial quota to each of them in proportion to the interests, neighbourhood distance and resources with which they intended to maintain a good cause. The funds gathered in that way would be used primarily to help the princes and their party as well as to cover expenses of armaments which they would take. 2. The emperor, having a large army in Austrian Netherlands, would settle for its deployment in a way that would make it possible to stop French troops at their borders from that side. However, he would reinforce his troops in Breisgau, like the King of Prussia in his estates in the Rhine, according to what the princes emigrants would propose in that case. 3. Spain and Sardinia would man their borders with the troops in a number appropriate to their ability and in a manner agreed in advance with the emperor and the King of Prussia. All those activities should be completed before the coming of the spring so as not to miss the first favourable opportunity which would occur. 4. Troops of the allied powers would not need to take any hostile action for the time being but would be used to protect operations of the emigrants and their supporters. If necessary, they would also secure retreat of emigrants' troops providing reinforcements, food, ammunition and other war resources. 5. After a careful consideration it was necessary to come to the conclusion that the moment of emigrants' encroachment to France should not be put off for too long and they should not be stopped from commencement of the planned operations all the more because the King of Sweden would be ready to support those activities in the chosen location already at the beginning of the spring. 6. If the King and the Queen of France seemed to want to convene the congress under the pretext of the matter of Avignon and the case of German princes having estates in France, and since the French ambassador, as far as we knew, had made a formal proposal on the matter at the court of Vienna, that idea seemed to be adoptable because it would favour moving the troops as in anticipation of the commencement of negotiations it would be necessary to prepare appropriate military forces to sustain them. It also seemed necessary to determine the place of the future congress for winter or at the beginning of the spring so that military actions could start in the spring, if they were to be taken. See Gustav III to C. v. Stedingk, Haga Palace, March 2, 1792, apostille No. 2 (Copie de la Plan mentionné dans la lettre de l'Imperatrice au Roi), RA, Muscovitica vol. 490. At this point it is worth mentioning that the plan sent by Catherine II to Gustav III was basically consistent with the project developed earlier at the court of Spain, which did not escape the king's attention. He did not know, however, that before the Russian proposal reached Stockholm, it had been presented in Vienna and Berlin. See B. Dembiński, *op. cit.*, pp. 194–195.

¹⁶⁸ See Gustav III to C. v. Stedingk, Gävle, February 6, 1792, RA, Muscovitica vol. 490; Z. Anusik, *Gustaw III i baron...*, p. 50.

For the time being, however, the King of Sweden had neither time nor reason to longer deal with the issue of his suspicion of the ulterior motives affecting the current actions of Catherine II. The *Riksdag* in Gävle had passed taxes requested by him and made it possible to get out of the financial crisis which he had long been in. The normalisation of fiscal problems in his own country was a good omen for the future. New taxes and expected foreign subsidies could, in fact, give the king sufficient financial resources to organise the long planned expedition against the revolutionary France¹⁶⁹. Both, Gustav III and careful observers of the Stockholm political scene were convinced that the expedition would finally take place. In his messages of February 13 and 14, 1792 Chevalier Jean de Gaussen wrote that the king was preparing the expedition against the French, gathering the corps of 12–15 thousand soldiers which he intended to give under the command of Evert Taube¹⁷⁰. At about the same time an old political opponent of Gustav III, Fredrik Axel von Fersen, also wrote to his son Fabian: "I frequently receive news from your brother from Brussels. Yet, I am not acquainted with the subject of his mission. I only know that quarrels between the emperor, the princes and the National Assembly are increasingly complicated and everything promises raising a shield and thus our miserable Sweden will surely be drawn into it and ultimately receive a blow of grace"¹⁷¹. The only thing in February 1792 which might have worried all supporters of the king was the fact that both, during the session of the *Riksdag* in Gävle and shortly after its end the rumours appeared about the planned murder of Gustav III by the French Jacobins¹⁷². But the king did not care about anything, clearly ignoring danger coming from that side.

On February 20, 1792 the ruler of Sweden finally decided to respond to the letter of the Baron of Breteuil of January 1 that year. Apologising for the delay in responding (the *Riksdag* in Gävle), Gustav III, at the same time, expressed his hope that the very year would finally be fortunate for the French who would be able to see their homeland saved and their lord restored to the throne. Further, the king wrote that fears of the baron, who had warned him against the convocation of the *Riksdag*, proved to be unfounded. Everything went well because the royalist party had such a huge advantage in three lower estates that the nobility opposition was compelled to remain calm.

¹⁶⁹ On the course and resolutions of the *Riksdag* in Gävle see J.A. Almquist, *Riksdagen i Gefle 1792*, Upsala 1895; H.A. Barton, *Scandinavia in the Revolutionary Era 1760–1815*, Minneapolis 1986, pp. 196–197; R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, pp. 161–184; E. Schröderheim, *Skrifter till konung Gustaf III:s historia*, E. Tegnér (ed.), 2nd ed., Stockholm 1892, pp. 102–155. See also N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 220.

¹⁷⁰ See A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige...*, p. 305.

¹⁷¹ As cited in *ibidem*, p. 307.

¹⁷² See N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 219–220.

Gustav III predicted that within the next eight days he would finish all his affairs in Sweden. He considered it a necessary condition for organising the planned expedition because "trying to restore order in others, you should start by restoring it at home". Further in his letter, the ruler of Sweden complained that negotiations with Spain were not progressing which might cause a delay in the planned activities. Fortunately, however, the King of Prussia sent a favourable response. As a result, the emperor got into real trouble because Gustav III, Catherine II and Frederick William II were forcing him to reveal his true intentions. On the other hand, the madness of the assembly made everything happen so fast that even now it was necessary to be ready for future actions. For that reason, the King of Sweden intended to tell Catherine II that he was ready to begin operations without waiting for Russian subsidies. In his opinion, that statement should prompt the court of St. Petersburg to send their own troops more quickly. The king ordered Breteuil, however, to bring forward a decision of Spaniards on co-financing his expedition to France. He also claimed that "if the powers who sent the princes huge sums, estimated at over 12 million *livres* in total, of which nothing was left, had sent him at least part of the money last autumn, he would probably have had at least one province in hand and would have been in a much better position than he is". At the end, the king informed the baron that three days before the young Count of Bouillé got to him bringing the plan of operations developed by his father. It assumed the seizure of Dunkirk and the march of the intervention troops on Paris. At the same time, Spain and Sardinia were to threaten the borders of France from the south. Gustav III also persuaded Breteuil that it was necessary to take actions without the loss of time, taking advantage of the fact that Catherine II was well inclined and the emperor could not interfere too much. The king also mentioned that he would like the advice given to Louis XVI to be followed. He meant in that case arranging a new escape of the King of France from Paris¹⁷³.

At the end of February 1792 Gustav III accepted the plan of landing of the Swedish troops in Normandy¹⁷⁴. At the same time he also wrote to Hans Axel von Fersen informing him of the plan of the joint actions presented

¹⁷³ See Gustav III to L.A. de Breteuil, Gävle, February 20, 1792, N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 245–246. See also *ibidem*, p. 219. The same letter see M. Price, *op. cit.*, pp. 462–463; Z. Anusik, *Gustaw III i baron...*, pp. 50–51.

¹⁷⁴ See A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige...*, p. 307. In connection with the planned landing of the Swedish-Russian expeditionary force on the shores of Normandy on March 30, 1792, a French officer, named de Vaugiraud, who had once served under the command of Admiral de Grasse during the American war, prepared (somewhat belated) note about the current state of French naval bases. According to his account, at the end of March 1792, 42 ships of the line, six equipped with 100 cannons, four equipped with 80 cannons and 32 equipped with 74 cannons were stationing in the bases of Brest, L'Orient and Rochefort. Not all of them, however, were well-prepared for the service. No one dealt with preparing them for war since the assembly had taken no

in Stockholm by Catherine II. According to the king, the Russian plan was no different from the old plan developed at the court of Madrid. For that reason Gustav III spoke about it very reluctantly. He also wrote that the empress had not yet received a definitive reply from Leopold II and without knowing the position of the emperor it was difficult to plan anything. The king also grumbled about the discord and mistrust in the relations between Louis XVI and his brothers, which constituted a major obstacle to the action in their favour. He ordered Fersen to redouble pressure on Breteuil to get money to finance the expedition of the Swedish army. Without money the king could do nothing and if he withdrew, then the whole thing would collapse. Regretting the unnecessary waste of time, Gustav III said in the end that nothing could convince Catherine II to give up the matter of the princes who she had decided to patronise from the beginning. He had actually lost all sympathy for the brothers of Louis XVI but saw no alternative. He decided to promote their interests because it sustained the interest of Catherine II in the affairs of France and Louis XVI¹⁷⁵. On March 2, 1792 Gustav III wrote to Fersen again as he was convinced that it was necessary to organise the escape of Louis XVI from France. The king wrote that if because of the law on passports Fersen was not be able to go to Paris personally, the king's escape should be organised by the English. He recognised Quentin James Craufurd as the best candidate to carry out the project. He also wrote that he had already suggested the same to the Marquis of Bouillé but had received no response from him.

decision in that regard. Vaugiraud emphasised also the poor training of commanders and crews. Moreover, he mentioned sending two ships of the line and three frigates to the French colonies. He wrote that to defend the bases the rebels could only arm eight ships in Brest, one in L'Orient and three in Rochefort, and the whole French squadron could not be ready to depart until the end of June. However, it had serious problems with supply. All three ports could provide food for only six ships since traders refused to accept payment in cash transaction slips. The source of the King of Sweden also claimed that Brest would not be able to equip even 12 ships because there was anxiety in the city, sailors were discontented and had continuing disputes with the commissioner of the assembly and sail makers did not want to work more. In his opinion, there must have been a disorder, untidiness and chaos in Brest which must significantly hamper any actions of the French fleet. Thus, if the assembly did not issue orders concerning commencement of the armament, it would be difficult to gather at the end of June a fleet of more than 12 ships of the line. Vaugiraud also predicted that at the beginning of that month there might be only a few frigates and one ship of the line in the service. The French officer, therefore, proposed to block those bases as well as commercial ports in Nantes, La Rochelle and Bordeaux. To his note he attached a detailed list of the ships that were in the above-mentioned ports. However, in his report he did not mention Toulon, which he felt was too far away from the planned landing of the intervention troops. He claimed, however, that if a counterrevolution broke out in the vicinity of that port, it would not play any role in the upcoming campaign. See *Note sur l'état actuel des ports de guerre de France*, RA, Gallica vol. 555.

¹⁷⁵ See Gustav III to H.A. v. Fersen, Stockholm, February 28, 1792, N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 247–248.

At the end, Gustav III said that in his opinion Fersen would be a suitable envoy of Louis XVI to the court of England. Therefore, he decided to send him letters of recommendation to George III which, if necessary, could be used by the count as letters of credence¹⁷⁶.

On March 2, 1792 Gustav III wrote also to Curt von Stedingk informing him that Catherine II was exerting strong pressure on him to make him accept the project assuming that the princes would play a leading role during the future intervention in France. According to the king, it was a serious mistake, both, because of divisions among the emigrants living in Koblenz and because of inconsistencies, not to mention the nothingness of the people who managed the princes' interests. Gustav III predicted that due to the weakness of the emigrants their actions would not bring any result while the princes, surrounded by small intrigues, intoxicated by the chatter of women, were losing time and were squandering the money which was sent to them on unnecessary expenses. Therefore, no effectiveness should be expected from their side. For that reason the king would like to avoid military cooperation with the worthless army of emigrants. Thus, Stedingk received an order to gently convince Catherine II about the idea since it was necessary to separate the operations of the Swedes and Russians from the operations of the emigrants. Gustav III strongly believed that the best solution would be landing in Normandy. The princes would actually prefer landing of the Swedes and Russians in Emden and attack on Charlemont but, according to the king, it was a bad idea and Stedingk's task was to convince Catherine II about it. The king learnt from Stackelberg that the empress intended to assign 16–17 thousand soldiers to the expedition to France. He regarded it to be a sufficient number to carry out her plans. Referring to the issue of rivalry between the Prince von Nassau and the Marquis of Bouillé concerning the influence in the command of the future expedition, Gustav III pointed out that he would like Nassau to command the combined Swedish-Russian fleet and Bouillé – the land forces. At the end of his letter, the king also mentioned the issue of Spain's accession to the Drottningholm treaty. Despite reservations of the court of St. Petersburg, which indicated that the Swedish-Russian-Spanish alliance could alert England which could, as a result, prevent the allied forces from landing in France, Gustav III was convinced that it was necessary to sign the treaty of alliance with Charles IV. In his opinion, the closer cooperation with the court of Madrid could consist in either its

¹⁷⁶ See Gustav III to H.A. v. Fersen, Stockholm, March 2, 1792, RA, Stafsundsarkivet, H.A. v. Fersens Samling, vol. 11. See also Z. Anusik, *Dwór sztokholmski wobec Wielkiej Brytanii w latach 1787–1792*, in: *Per saecula. Dyplomacja-gospodarka-historiografia. Studia ofiarowane Profesorowi Edwardowi Alfredowi Mierzwie w 45. Rocznice pracy naukowej*, B. Krysztopa-Czupryńska, A. Korytko (eds), Olsztyn-Piotrków Trybunalski 2009, p. 80.

immediate accession to the Drottningholm treaty or the conclusion of the separate pact¹⁷⁷.

On March 4, 1792 Gustav III finally wrote to Catherine II whom he tried to gently dissuade from forcing through the plan of the future action against France presented in early February. He began by expressing the satisfaction from the fact that both courts looked at the French affairs exactly in the same way. Further, he wrote that he took very cautious steps towards the emperor, realising the necessity of winning him. Therefore, he sent orders to Baron Nolcken in Vienna to act in the same way as the Russian envoy to the capital of Austria. Gustav III also assured the empress that her plan was simply perfect. He pointed out, however, that time was short and the powers had not been ready yet to act. He also claimed that the decisive blow must be given by the Swedish and Russian armies. Only their victory would allow the princes to invade France. Therefore, the ruler of Sweden made a proposal to start a concentration of troops and send them to France without any further delay. Commending the Prince von Nassau, very dedicated to a good cause, to grace of Catherine II, Gustav III also expressed the view that after the victory, Louis XVI should exemplarily punish all the rebels. He also considered persuading Marie Antoinette to reach a settlement with the princes one of the most important tasks of the allied courts. In the final part of the letter, Gustav III did not, however, refrain from accusing the emigrants of the thoughtless squander of the money sent to them. The king ended his arguments in that case with an emphatic statement that not the princes but the Swedish and Russian armies should act on the first line of events¹⁷⁸.

In this place, it should be emphasised that for all the time Gustav III had never lost sight of the Polish case. Despite reassuring reports from St. Petersburg, he had not divested himself of a suspicion that Catherine II was planning to invade the Republic of Poland. The king did not disclose, however, his doubts to the empress and in the first half of March 1792 Stockholm and St. Petersburg were exchanging correspondence with the aim to agree on a common position on the organisation of the planned expedition against France. But when at the same time Otto Magnus von Stackelberg in Stockholm carefully started sounding Sweden's attitudes in case of Russian intervention in Poland, Gustav III decided to force Catherine II to make real concessions in exchange for neutrality in the expected conflict. Thus, on March 13, 1792 he wrote to Curt von Stedingk informing him about his talks with Stackelberg. He said on that occasion that he strongly opposed Russian

¹⁷⁷ See Gustav III to C. v. Stedingk, Haga Palace, March 2, 1792, *ibidem*, Muscovitica vol. 490; Z. Anusik, *Gustaw III i baron...*, pp. 52–53.

¹⁷⁸ See Gustav III to Catherine II, Haga Palace, March 4, 1792, N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 248–250. See also *ibidem*, p. 204.

intervention in the Republic of Poland as it would distract the empress from the French issues. He ordered Stedingk to try to convince Catherine II of the need to address the French problems in the first place. Firmly refusing the consent to the accession of Denmark to the Swedish-Russian alliance suggested by Stackelberg, Gustav III ordered his ambassador to find out what the real intentions of the court of St. Petersburg were. He also wrote that the present circumstances should bring tangible benefits for Sweden. To be able to use that opportunity optimally he, however, had to know what the empress was aiming at. Assuming that Catherine II was preparing a new partition of Poland, it would be necessary to make sure if the case of France was not only to divert neighbours' attention from the affairs of the Republic of Poland since it was likely that the empress wanted to embroil the King of Sweden in the Western affairs to derive all the benefits of the new division of Poland for herself. Not giving up a thought of the partition of Poland, Gustav III put forward a suggestion that in that case Catherine II could consider a possibility to address both issues simultaneously, sending to France the troops which in other circumstances (now ruler of Sweden was her ally) she would have to keep on the border of Finland. Although the king wrote further that he could hardly believe that the empress would give up the cause in which, so far, she showed an avid interest, he ended his letter with the following statement: "After all, whether the empress would like to sincerely and without any hidden political objectives take part in the resolution of the French affairs or she would like to use them only in order to have a free hand in relation to the Poles, it is of utmost importance that I know her intentions not to expose myself to any false actions and not to lose opportunities to gain benefits of favourable circumstances, if they appeared". In other words, Gustav III believed that if his suspicions were correct, Catherine II should generously pay not only for his resignation from applying for the crown after Stanisław August but perhaps also for the withdrawal of the idea of organising a monarchist crusade against revolutionary France¹⁷⁹.

If, however, the King of Sweden, even for a moment, thought about the resignation from organising the expedition aimed to bring deliverance to Louis XVI and his family, he did not reveal it to the Baron of Breteuil. On March 13, 1792 he wrote to him that he had dealt with all internal problems and was ready to start operations. Expressing joy out of the negotiations conducted by the baron in Berlin he complained, however, that his own negotiations with Spain had not been so successful. Despite his suspicions expressed explicitly in a letter to Stedingk, Gustav III assured Breteuil that

¹⁷⁹ See Gustav III to C. v. Stedingk, Stockholm, March 13, 1792, RA, *Muscovitica* vol. 490. For the same letter see also N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 251–253. Its summary see *ibidem*, pp. 205–206. See also C.T. Odhner, *op. cit.*, pp. 60–61; R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, pp. 187–189.

Catherine II was still well-disposed. He warned, however, his correspondent that he would not be able to do anything without Spanish subsidies. He was also worried that Austria and Prussia had sought to exclude northern courts from the operation against France. He pointed to the danger in which France would be if its fate depended only on Berlin and Vienna without participation of Sweden and Russia. Expressing the hope that in the nearest future Breteuil would send him money, the king also asked the baron for a quick response to be able to make preparations matching its content¹⁸⁰. On the same day Gustav III also wrote to Hans Axel von Fersen asking him to consider the possibility of preparing the escape of Louis XVI to England or Flanders¹⁸¹.

The letters quoted above clearly indicated that Gustav III was not going to give up the idea of playing a leading role on the European political scene. However, all his plans and intentions were shattered quite unexpectedly. A group of fanatical opponents of the king from the noble estate planned to assassinate him. On March 16, 1792 a former captain of the Royal Guard, Jacob Johan Anckarström, fatally wounded Gustav III during a masked ball in the Stockholm Opera¹⁸². In that way, a man whose actions could have a significant impact on the development of events both, in the West and East of the European continent was eliminated from the political game. It may be also suspected that, contrary to what Curt von Stedingk wrote from St. Petersburg, Catherine II did not have the slightest reason to regret that Gustav III had been assassinated. After the information about death of Leopold II it was, in fact, the second auspicious message in a very short period of time. Both rulers were, in fact, potentially serious threats to the project promoted in her circles to carry out the military intervention in the Republic of Poland. Their disappearance from the political scene seemed to remove the last obstacles on the way to its implementation.

¹⁸⁰ See Gustav III to L.A. de Breteuil, Stockholm, March 13, 1792; N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 251. The same letter see M. Price, *op. cit.*, p. 463; Z. Anusik, *Gustaw III i baron...*, p. 61.

¹⁸¹ See A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige...*, p. 295; N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 217–218; Z. Anusik, *Kongres zbrojny...*, p. 175; idem, *Gustaw III i baron...*, p. 61.

¹⁸² On the plot to assassinate the king see H.A. Barton, *Scandinavia...*, pp. 201–202; R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, pp. 153–158, 188–198; B. Hennings, *Gustav III. En biografi*, Stockholm 1957, pp. 312–317; A. Geffroy, *Gustave III et la cour de France. Suivi d'une étude critique sur Marie-Antoinette et Louis XVI apocryphes*, vol. II, Paris 1867, pp. 279–292; B. v. Schinkel, *Minnen ur Sveriges nyare historia samlade af...*, C.W. Bergman (ed.), part 2 (*Gustaf III och hans tid 1788–1792*), Stockholm 1852, pp. 201–217; C. Nordmann, *Gustave III. Un démoctare couronné*, Lille 1986, pp. 250–260. The main participants of the conspiracy were Adolf Ludvig Ribbing, Nils Bielke, Clas Fredrik Horn, Carl Pontus Liljehorn, Jacob Engeström and Jacob Johan Anckarström. Behind the scenes, there was an old enemy of the king, Carl Gustaf Pechlin. For further details on the assassin and the main driving force of the plot see L. Stavenow, *Anckarström Jacob Johan*, in: *Svenskt Biografiskt Lexikon*, vol. I, Stockholm 1918, pp. 610–614; H. Lindberg, *En ränksmidare. Strödda blad ur 1700-talets partistrider*, Stockholm 1928.

Supporters of the current political line of the king reacted quite differently, though. On March 25, 1792 the Baron of Breteuil, not yet knowing about the tragedy that had happened in Stockholm, wrote his last letter to Gustav III. He wrote in it that the example of the King of Sweden very positively influenced the conduct of Frederick William II, showing more and more interest in the French affairs. A young King of Hungary seemed to the baron similarly well disposed, following the example of Emperor Joseph II and taking advice of the Empress of Russia. Breteuil also consoled himself with hope that the King of Hungary decided to agree with the ruler of Sweden and that the sole objective of his actions would be restoring the former prerogatives of the King of France as well as establishing order in his kingdom. Although the main hope of all good Frenchmen was still Gustav III, Breteuil lamented that Spain had not yet provided him with the promised subsidies. Basing on the recent messages of the Duke of La Vauguyon the baron drew the conclusion that Charles IV had decided to give the King of Sweden at least four million *livres*. La Vauguyon also received orders to try to win a new minister, Count Aranda, for the concept of paying subsidies to Gustav III. Breteuil himself, acting on behalf of Louis XVI, also promised the Spaniards that they would receive a refund of all the sums transferred to the King of Sweden for the planned expedition to France. The baron dissuaded, however, the king from the idea of applying for a loan on account of Louis XVI. He had indeed appropriate authorisations but he thought he would not be able to use them properly. He stated that people with money would not give a loan without a collateral while trading houses, which had made a fortune on the interests with the king, were unable to take any risks and would not give him a loan, even at very high interest. Breteuil shared the view of Gustav III that the princes, having great funds which they received from the powers, could share them with the King of Sweden. Those measures, combined with Spanish subsidies, would suffice to finance the first stage of the operation of the Swedish army. But what was the most important in the baron's letter was the fact that for the first time he had spoken openly about the intervention in the internal affairs of France since he wrote that the greater part of the kingdom was just waiting for the signal to throw off the yoke of the rebels. He also expressed a great satisfaction with Gustav III's approval of a plan of military operations prepared by the Marquis of Bouillé and assured the ruler of Sweden that the French royal couple fully accepted all his ideas and was looking forward to putting them into practice. The Baron of Breteuil ended his letter saying that Fersen would give his lord all the details of a terrible position of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. On that occasion, he also allowed himself to express hope that the friendship of Gustav III towards the

French royal couple would finally put an end to all their miseries¹⁸³. The King of Sweden would, therefore, have every reason to be pleased if he could read the contents of the message. Breteuil's letter reached Stockholm only on April 6, 1792. Gustav III would be equally contented with a letter from the Prince of Condé. However, also that message arrived in the capital of Sweden far too late¹⁸⁴.

Until the last moments of his life Gustav III was interested in the developments on the international scene. He counted on the imminent outbreak of war between France and Austria. Yet, he did not live to see that. Having made a will and regulated internal affairs of his country, he died on March 29, 1792¹⁸⁵. Nils Åkeson ended his book saying that dying Gustav III did not know that his plans for France no longer had much chance of implementation. Vienna had long treated the king with undisguised dislike and contempt. The collapse of Florida Blanca shattered all the hopes for Spanish subsidies. Catherine II for a long time had not intended to participate in the French fuss. All developments on the international scene were in empress favour. The death of Leopold II, the collapse of Florida Blanca and Anckarström's bullet created a sequence of events that let Catherine safely carry out her plans towards Poland, certain that no one would be able to stand on her way¹⁸⁶. In my view, however, this is fallacy. Those were not external factors

¹⁸³ See L.A. de Breteuil to Gustav III, Brussels, March 25, 1792, RA, Gallica vol. 524. For the same letter see M. Price, *op. cit.*, pp. 463–465; Z. Anusik, *Gustaw III i baron...*, pp. 62–63.

¹⁸⁴ On March 28, 1792 Louis Joseph, Prince of Condé replied to a letter from Gustav III of January 20, 1792. The letter of the King of Sweden did not reach the recipient before March 27. However, this was not due to the negligence of Baron Oxenstierna but to the fact that a courier sent from Sweden fell seriously ill and was forced to stop in Hamburg for a long time. Condé sent words of gratitude to the king for the interest shown to the cases of the emigrants and France. He claimed that, indeed, France had true friends in the North. From there the rescue for a good cause and punishment for the destroyers of religions, kings and nations would come. From the North the rebirth of France would come, restoration of its due position among the countries of Europe and making it what it should be for the sake of political stability, so necessary for the stabilisation of all the thrones and the existence of all the empires. The prince also thanked for the offer of the refuge in Pomerania which he had received from Gustav III for himself and his comrades. He assured of his willingness to serve the country. He was impatiently waiting for the expected reinforcements from the King of Sweden and the Empress of Russia which were at that time more necessary than ever. But he could see with regret that in the powers' projects the emigrants were granted a minor role in the future actions since it was planned to move prince's troops away from seashores where Gustav III intended to land with his corps. It would be much better if both, he and the surrounding nobility could serve under the direct orders of the King of Sweden. In that way, they could in fact display their commitment to the cause of all the rulers. He ended by saying that he could not wait for the moment when he could, together with the King of Sweden, lead to the restoration of the throne of his sovereign. See L.J. Prince of Condé to Gustav III, Bingen, March 28, 1792, RA, Gallica vol. 522.

¹⁸⁵ See A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige...*, p. 308; A. Geffroy, *op. cit.*, p. 296.

¹⁸⁶ See N. Åkeson, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 221–222.

that sealed the withdrawal of Sweden from active politics in the international arena. Conclusive in that regard was the will of the Regent, Charles, Duke of Södermanland, who had long belonged to the group of determined political opponents of his dead brother¹⁸⁷. The closest associates of Gustav III did not have the slightest illusions as to the political line of the new government. The keenest supporter of the intervention in France, Baron Evert Taube, informing Hans Axel von Fersen, a faithful friend of the French royal couple, about the death of the king explained in plain text: "My grief will end only with the end of my existence". He added in a code: "Do not count any more, my Dear Friend, that Sweden will provide the unfortunate King of France with any support. Love of Sweden is dead and the only friend of Their Highnesses is not alive, and there is no person in the world who was able to implement our grand plan"¹⁸⁸.

¹⁸⁷ See mainly R.N. Bain, *op. cit.*, p. 213.

¹⁸⁸ See E. Taube to H.A. v. Fersen, Stockholm, March 29, 1792 as cited in A. Söderhjelm, *Sverige...*, pp. 308–309.

CONCLUSION

It is time for final conclusions. Let us start with a question of the attitude of Gustav III towards France. It seems that initially the king saw in it mainly a source of subsidies for his country and a kind of a “guardian” who was to watch his safety. This arrangement was quite comfortable but entailed certain consequences. It significantly limited Swedish freedom to manoeuvre in the international arena. Louis XVI’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Charles de Vergennes, could afford to act as the king’s mentor and guide. He also effectively inhibited all attempts of Gustav III to dump his supervision. The situation changed dramatically in 1787. The death of Vergennes coincided with the beginning of a serious internal crisis in France. At first, the king did not really understand its essence. Nonetheless, he quickly realised that Louis XVI was dealing with the same opposition of the privileged as he had faced at least since the late seventies. Comparing his own effectiveness in the fight against the nobility opposition to the weakness and inconsistency of the King of France, he could not understand that their situation was radically different. It was so since in Sweden the ruler could count on support of the three lower estates. In France almost all social classes were against royal absolutism. It is also worth noting that Gustav III initially underestimated the scale of the French crisis, still demanding the regular payment of subsidies from the court of Versailles and the support for his ambitious political plans. When it turned out that France was not able to meet his requirements, the Swedish king without much regret (he regretted only lost subsidies) gave up thinking about maintaining existing relations with Versailles. Thus, everything seems to indicate that Gustav III treated France in a purely instrumental way trying to make the best use of the fact that until 1787 it was rather a French court that sought to maintain friendly relations with his country.

The internal crisis, which started in 1787, meant that France was no longer able to play the current role in the international arena. One of the first European politicians who became aware of that fact was Gustav III. Not looking to the former ally for too long, he launched completely independent

political actions and he decided that he could not miss the opportunity created by a new crisis in the East (Turkish-Russian-Austrian war). Initially, the king tried to play a role in Western Europe (Dutch crisis) but he ultimately decided to declare war on Russia. In that way he went down into history as the last King of Sweden who could effectively oppose the power of the tsarist empire. Although during war operations Gustav III did not have any spectacular successes (maybe except for the victory in the second naval battle at Svensksund), he led to the huge strengthening of his position in the international arena.

The conflict with imperial courts brought him closer to all their opponents. Gustav III conducted negotiations to conclude an alliance with the Triple Alliance (England, Prussia, Holland), with Turkey and with the Republic of Poland. Ultimately, however, he decided to restore peace with Russia. There is no doubt that he did it because of the developments in France. The king had long been terribly afraid of any revolutions. And it was not about social or economic changes caused by it. Conducting a coup d'état in February 1789 and abolishing a number of privileges of the nobility, Gustav III opened the way for a profound transformation of socio-economic nature in his own country. It is a different thing that he did it somewhat against his own convictions fearing the outbreak of the discontent of lower social classes and in order to save the system of absolutism¹. However, we can absolutely agree with the statement that "no one contributed so greatly to the work of undermining the estate society, as a friend of the nobility, Gustav III"². It was so as the King of Sweden considered a revolution a destructive force threatening all the thrones. He was afraid that the example of France, where the position of the king weakened with each passing month, could lead to a collapse of the monarchy in all other European countries.

For this reason, Gustav III came up with the idea of making the armed intervention in France. Therefore, he did not show greater interest in the proposals of Prussia and England which at the turn of 1790 and 1791 were preparing for the military operation against the empress. The most important thing for him was, at that time, rescuing the threatened French monarchy. Actions taken by Gustav III to win the Polish crown or his preparations for

¹ We can quote the king's statement from the time of the *Riksdag* of 1789 when he allegedly said to one of his secretaries that the representatives of the nobility forced him, against his own feelings, to inflict the pain in order to save the kingdom. Similarly, during the *Riksdag* of 1792, Gustav III said that the nobility did not understand their own interests. He ended his statement with the words: "I am a friend of the nobility and I cannot be the king without the nobility". See J.P. Findeisen, "Królewski rewolucjonista". *Król Gustaw III u progu kapitalistycznej przebudowy szwedzkiego systemu feudalnego (1771–1792)*, "Zapiski Historyczne", vol. LXII, 1997, issue 2–3, p. 77.

² See S. Carlsson, J. Rosén, *Den svenska historien. Gustav III, en upplyst envaldshärskare*, vol. II, Stockholm 1979, p. 190. See also J.P. Findeisen, *op. cit.*, pp. 75–76.

a conquest of Norway should be perceived in this context. The war with Russia brought the royal finances to the ruins. Not finding money in his own country, Gustav III started frantic search for resources to finance military expeditions against revolutionary France. Not finding understanding with the representatives of the Triple Alliance, he increasingly began to lean towards the concept of an alliance with Russia. A decision to sign the treaty of alliance with Catherine II finally sealed failure of Louis XVI's escape from Paris in June 1791 (the King of Sweden played quite a considerable role in preparation of the project). Almost immediately after stopping the King of France at Varennes, Gustav III started to put together a broad coalition of powers whose primary aim was to rescue the institutions of the French monarchy. His initiatives in this regard, however, were not understood at European courts. Surprise and sometimes even indignation was elicited by the fact that the proposal to organise a monarchical league was made by the ruler of the state not belonging to one of the leading powers of the continent. Swedish diplomats met almost everywhere with cool and sometimes even hostile reception. The only result of a large-scale diplomatic action was the signing of the Drottningholm treaty with Russia in October 1791. What should be regarded as a success of the Swedish diplomacy was establishing friendly, and at the same time very promising for the future, relations with the court of Madrid. It is also worth noting that Gustav III remained in constant contact with Louis XVI and his trusted representative in exile, Louis Auguste, Baron of Breteuil. The circles of the Tuileries court, with an active participation of Hans Axel von Fersen, proposed the convocation of the military congress whose main task was to restore the strong royal power in France. After some hesitation (Gustav III was an advocate of making armed intervention in defence of Louis XVI), the court of Stockholm agreed to support this proposal. However, as early as January 1792, the King of Sweden decided that the further promotion of the project, reluctantly received in many European capitals, would not bring any benefits to the so-called "good cause" and so he withdrew his support for the concept. A similar evolution of his views can be observed in regard to the French emigrants. The initial fascination with the circle evolved in the early 1792 and became a clear aversion to everything that was happening in Koblenz.

The attitude of Gustav III to Austria deserves a separate discussion. For both, the king and all his diplomats Leopold II was the object of a constant criticism and condemnation. In Stockholm it was early realised that without a participation of the emperor, organising any coalition would be impossible. Encountering the resistance of the Vienna court, the King of Sweden thought about putting forward the monarch of Spain as a future leader of the league. At the beginning of 1792 he refrained, however, from promoting that

idea realising that without winning Leopold II it would not be possible to form any alliance directed against the revolutionary France. It seems that the Stockholm ministry could not for a very long time understand a prosaic fact that Austria was a superpower with vital interests both, in the West and the East of Europe. Leopold II was in no hurry to intervene in France, not only because he did not want to prevent the revival of its power position. The dilatoriness of the Vienna court in French matters resulted mainly from the fact that the emperor simply did not trust Russia. He feared that the engagement in Western Europe would give Catherine II too much freedom in regard to both, Turkey (the empress signed a peace treaty with the sultan only at the beginning of January 1792) and the Republic of Poland³. What deserves a particular attention is a relationship between Gustav III and Catherine II. The old historiography is dominated by the idea that the empress cleverly embroiled Sweden and, above all, Austria and Prussia in the French affairs in order to get room for her manoeuvre in relation to Poland. In my opinion, it is not the correct reasoning. It is obvious that Catherine II quite early (probably at the turn of 1791 and 1792) decided that she would not send her troops against the revolutionary France. Her position did not change, however, plans of Gustav III. Russian corps consisted of only about 17 thousand soldiers and could be well replaced with other forces. From the point of view of the court of Stockholm Russian subsidies were the most important and there was no question in St. Petersburg about withholding them. The fact that the empress did not intend to send her soldiers to help Louis XVI does not prove that she carried out a consistent and far-sighted policy. Let us note that the perspective of the emergence of Russian troops in Western Europe did not arouse great enthusiasm either in Vienna or Berlin. Russian policy used to be perceived through the prism of Polish-Russian war of 1792 and destroying the work of the Great Diet. We must remember, however, that a decision to intervene in Poland at the beginning of 1792 was not yet sealed. A series of events beneficial for Russia made the empress decide to send her armies against the Republic of Poland. The sudden death of Leopold II, the assassination of Gustav III (who in mid-March 1792 more and more closely watched the actions of Russia in Central and Eastern Europe) and martial vigour of the French Legislative Assembly probably led at St. Petersburg court to the outweighing influence of the supporters of an armed operations against the Poles.

³ B. Dembiński admittedly said that the caution of Leopold II in reference to the French affairs stemmed not so much from the fear of Poland, but from the "urgency and recklessness" of the emigrants themselves. On the other hand, the same author admitted that maintaining a strong and related personal union of the Republic of Poland and Saxony was one of the principles of Austrian politics at the turn of 1791 and 1792. See idem, *Rosya a Rewolucya Francuska*, Kraków 1896, pp. 145, 198–199.

It seems paradoxical in this situation that the man who for several months had consistently sought to unleash war in Western Europe did not live to see its outbreak. It is difficult to say whether the Swedish army would have joined the actions against the revolutionary France, given the fact that almost at the same time the Russian army was ordered to enter the Republic of Poland. On the other hand, we can also ask whether such an order would have been issued if the king had not been assassinated. One thing, however, seems certain. Gustav III clearly changed his view on the question of the military intervention in France. Initially, it seemed to him that it was enough to send few-thousand corps to restore the full power to Louis XVI. At the beginning of 1792 he was planning to carry out operations on a large scale with the involvement of huge forces and means.

Perhaps he began to realise the fact that the internal situation in France differed fundamentally from the situation in his own country. For a very long time the king rejected a thought that the vast majority of the French did not wish to return to social, economic and political relations from before 1789. Another paradox seems to be the fact that Gustav III was murdered at a time when his proposals were accepted by Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. The Tuileries court, initially quite sceptical towards the idea of an armed intervention in France, was promoting a concept of the congress with the persistence worthy of a better cause. In March 1792 the Baron of Breteuil, acting on behalf of the French royal couple, agreed on both, landing of the Swedish corps in Normandy and the organisation of a new escape of the royal family from Paris. The death of Gustav III shattered, however, all those intentions. The dying king also never learnt that in late March 1792 a chance for fulfilling all his desires and dreams appeared.

Swedish diplomatic correspondence also allows us to draw more conclusions. The most important one seems to be that the French Revolution was perceived differently by those diplomats who had stayed in France and differently by those who were staying in other European capitals. Accounts of Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein indicate that he understood the essence of the transformations that he witnessed in France best. As an aristocratic liberal and a supporter of constitutional monarchy, he was not well perceived at the court of Stockholm where his reports were received with a clear disbelief. Very characteristically, however, Erik Bergstedt who, being an ardent royalist, was given the task of correcting ambassador's reports, after learning about the situation in France also began to write accounts in a very similar vein. Ardent conservatives similar to Hans Axel von Fersen decided that the secretary of the Parisian mission (knighted townsman) too much cared about principles of freedom and equality of all people professed by the French. We should also pay attention to the fact that the direct

contact with the revolution roused a thrill of excitement in people who had contact with it. Gotthard Mauritz von Rehausen, who visited Paris in 1789, was deeply moved. Hans Axel von Fersen was very anxious in February 1792 and even Erik Bergstedt, accused by Count Fersen of democratic liking, was terribly anxious about his safety! Swedish diplomats, watching the developments in France from the perspective of other European capitals, looked at the revolution through the prism of their previous experience. They could not understand it, especially those who, like Fersen, Stedingk or Taube, had spent many years in France of the *ancien régime*. The ways and methods of diagnosing the revolution adopted by them turned out to be imperfect. It was different in the case of Staël von Holstein who successfully tried to rationalise the phenomena observed by him, attempting sometimes to discover the mechanisms governing the revolution. It should be thought that he understood the essence of the events occurring in France much better than Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. It is also worth noting that almost all Swedish diplomats watched the events in France through the prism of historical experience of their own country. In revolution they mainly saw chaos, anarchy and collapse of state institutions. Remembering the sad fate of their ancestors, who came to live in the Swedish "Age of Liberty", even such an outspoken liberal as Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein seemed to yearn for peace and stability which, in his opinion, could be given to the French by strong executive.

Analysis of the source material and the lessons learnt from what I have read force me also to make some observations of a more general nature. It appears that for the first time the attempt is made on the basis of the Polish historiography to look at the international situation at the end of the eighteenth century from the perspective of the secondary state, not belonging to the group of major European powers. The situation of eighteenth-century Sweden was indeed quite specific which resulted from the fact that the country actively participated in European politics at the beginning and then, after a long break, at the end of that century. Thus, it is justified to believe in this situation that the activation of the Swedish foreign policy at the end of the rule of Gustav III should be regarded as a Swedish attempt to recover a position of superpower lost in the "Age of Liberty". And although that attempt was unsuccessful, the Swedish example undermines the existing historiography claims that in the eighteenth century the state playing a smaller role in the international arena was supposedly forced to pursue political objectives outlined by a group of the great powers. We can also reflect on why the Swedish diplomatic initiatives met with such a large reserve in most European courts. Was it about the memory of the weakness of Sweden in the "Age of Liberty" or rather the fear of restoration of the Swedish power of the

previous century? Gustav III himself undoubtedly tried to refer to the tradition of Gustav II Adolf. By the vast majority of contemporaries as well as descendants he was considered to be rather a follower of Charles XII... Gustav's diplomatic efforts to create a broad coalition of European powers revealed another phenomena. It turned out that at the end of the eighteenth century all, without exception, states were guided in their endeavours only by their own selfish interest. In face of observed in that time clear globalisation of European policy it led to a situation that achieving consensus on any matter was simply impossible. A characteristic feature of contemporary diplomacy was also a huge ease with which all conquest and partitioning plans were made. In reports of Swedish diplomats information that France was threatened with the partition by the aggressive neighbours (England, Austria, Prussia) appeared repeatedly. If a prospect of the partition of one of the great European powers was considered no one could be surprised with the partition idea with regard to the state so insignificant on the contemporary political scene as the Republic of Poland. What also seems puzzling is a huge reluctance of the powers in relation to the idea of the convocation of the military congress on France. Perhaps it resulted from the fact that none of the eighteenth-century congresses led, in fact, to the positive results. In this situation, it seems paradoxical that only the experience of bloody revolutionary and Napoleonic wars convinced the representatives of the main European countries about the need to convene the congress to regulate all the affairs of our continent. It was the Congress of Vienna which, however, did not start its deliberations until September 1814.

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