

“THE RUSSIAN EAGLES OVER THE SEINE” RUSSIAN OCCUPATION OF PARIS IN 1814

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In 1814, after twenty-two years, France was once again invaded by enemy forces. Following Emperor Napoleon’s defeats in Russia and Germany, the victorious Allies had crossed the Rhine River with an intention to put an end to a long-standing conflict with the Napoleonic regime. Much has been written on this famous campaign and several important works have been published recently on the topic, notably the first installment of Michael V. Leggiere’s two-volume study.¹ The purpose of the paper is to look at just one event of this campaign, the occupation of Paris, from the Russian point of view. There is virtually no study dealing with this topic, largely due to the fact that hardly any Russian primary sources on this campaign are available in English or French, two key languages of the Napoleonic research. This paper is based on Russian memoirs and diaries that had been mostly unavailable in the West, and it is

part of my ongoing efforts to make these sources available to non-Russian audiences.²



Russian Cossacks passing by the Arc de Triumph in Paris (by Georg-Emmanuel Opitz)

In the afternoon of March 30, 1814, Emperor Alexander of Russia arrived on the Buttes-Chaumont and, ascending a nearby hill, surveyed the city rising in front of him in distance. It was Paris, the city Alexander longed to see for the past few years and now only hours separated him from a triumphant entry into the capital of his greatest enemy. Throughout the morning the assailants and the defenders of Paris were equally matched, but as the Allies began to concentrate their forces, the tide of war quickly turned in their favor. Alexander, on horseback since dawn, supervised unit movements and marked out his officers for promotions and rewards. By afternoon, the Allies set up large

batteries and first few shots were fired into Paris.³ The French commanders, realizing that Paris was at

¹Michael V. Leggiere, *The Fall of Napoleon: The Allied Invasion of France, 1813-1814* (Cambridge, 2007).

² Starting in 2012, the Frontline Books will publish a three volume anthology of Russian memoirs and diaries.

³ For details see N. Divov, “Po povodu rasskaza M.F. Orlova o vzyatii Parizha,” *Russkii arkhiv*, 1/1 (1878): 127-128; Alexander

the mercy of the Allies, chose to negotiate and sent an officer to the hill of Belleville, overlooking the Faubourg St. Martin, where Alexander established his command post. Nikolai Divov, a young officer in the Russian Guard artillery, saw "a [French] negotiator arriving... [Our commander] escorted the negotiator to the Emperor [Alexander] who was standing, with his entire suite, not far from our battery."⁴ Alexander's aide-de-camp, Colonel Mikhail Orlov had misgivings about this officer, who, he thought, looked more like as "a runaway prisoner of war who lost his way in the rear of our army."⁵ The Russian officers watched as Alexander ordered his entire suite to leave and, surrounded by King Frederick William of Prussia, and Prince Karl Philipp Fürst zu Schwarzenberg, he conversed with a French negotiator, who requested the Allies to stop their attacks. Alexander responded that he would agree to armistice only if Paris surrendered at once⁶ and, since the officer was not empowered to accept such terms, the Russian sovereign sent his Aide-de-camp Colonel Orlov, to Marshal Auguste Marmont who directed the French defenses. Orlov found Marmont in the "very first line of the French skirmishers" where he stood "with a sword in hand, and through his actions and voice encouraging his spread out battalions to resolute defense. He had a firm and warlike appearance but the poignant expression on his face also revealed the anxiety of a statesman who bore a vast burden. This responsibility hanged heavily on him and it seems that he was already anticipating that he would become a target for attacks and a victim of wounded national pride." The two exchanged brief greetings and quickly moved to a business, with Orlov outlining the Russian demands: hostilities to be suspended; the French troops to retire within the gates; plenipotentiaries to be instantly appointed to make arrangements for the surrender of Paris.

Mikhailovsky-Danilevsky, *History of the Campaign in France in the Year 1814* (London, 1840), 368.

⁴ Divov, *Po povodu rasskaza M.F. Orlova...*, 128.

⁵ Mikhail Orlov, "Kapitulyatsiya Parizha v 1814 godu," *Russkaya starina*, 12 (1877), 635.

⁶ According to Divov, he overheard Alexander saying in French, "Que demain, à 6 heures du matin, la ville de Paris soit évacuée par les troupes françaises." The negotiator responded, "Les ordres du vainqueur seront remplis."

Marmont tentatively agreed and suggested holding an official meeting at the barrier of Pantin.⁷

Upon hearing Orlov's report, Emperor Alexander ordered Secretary of State Count Nesselrode to negotiate with Marmont. He was accompanied by Orlov, and Prince Schwarzenberg's aide-de-camp Count Paar. Marshals Marmont and Mortier represented the French side.⁸ The two sides met in a small house outside of the barrier of Pantin. Marshal Marmont - whom Louis Antoine Fauvelet de Bourrienne had seen earlier and could barely recognize because of his "beard of eight days' growth, the greatcoat... in tatters and he was blackened with powder from head to foot"⁹ - spoke for the entire delegation while his associates kept silence for the most part; Mortier's face told a story of a trouble man, who "expressed his assent to his comrade's words or disapprobation of our demands by nods."¹⁰ Nesselrode demanded that Paris should capitulate with all the troops it contained. Although Marmont and Mortier did not oppose the occupation of the capital by the Allies, they "indignantly" refused to surrender their troops. They spoke of their long and distinguished military service, and added that they would rather perish than sign such a condition. Nesselrode tried various arguments to shake their resolution, including placing responsibility on their shoulders if the consequence of their obstinacy should be the storming of Paris. But Marmont and Mortier remained firm in their resolve. So Nesselrode had to return to the Allied sovereigns for new instructions. Marmont sent General Jean-Baptiste-Gabriel Delapointe with him to bring back the ultimatum of the sovereigns and deliver a letter from

⁷ Orlov, "Kapitulyatsiya Parizha v 1814 godu," 637-638; August-Frédéric-Louis Wiese Marmont, *Mémoires du Maréchal Marmont, duc de Raguse de 1792 à 1841* (Paris, 1857), VI, 246-247. Joseph Bonaparte, whom Napoleon left to supervise Paris, authorized the negotiations. Louis Antoine Fauvelet de Bourrienne, *Memoirs of Napoleon Bonaparte* (New York: Scribners, 1895), III, 406; Marmont, VI, 351.

⁸ Mortier was late to the meeting, causing a Russian participant to jibe, "The cause of his tardiness was plain enough: to him who had lately blown up the Kremlin, it could not be very pleasant to hasten to a conference for the surrender of Paris." Mikhailovsky-Danilevsky, 372

⁹ Bourrienne, III, 407.

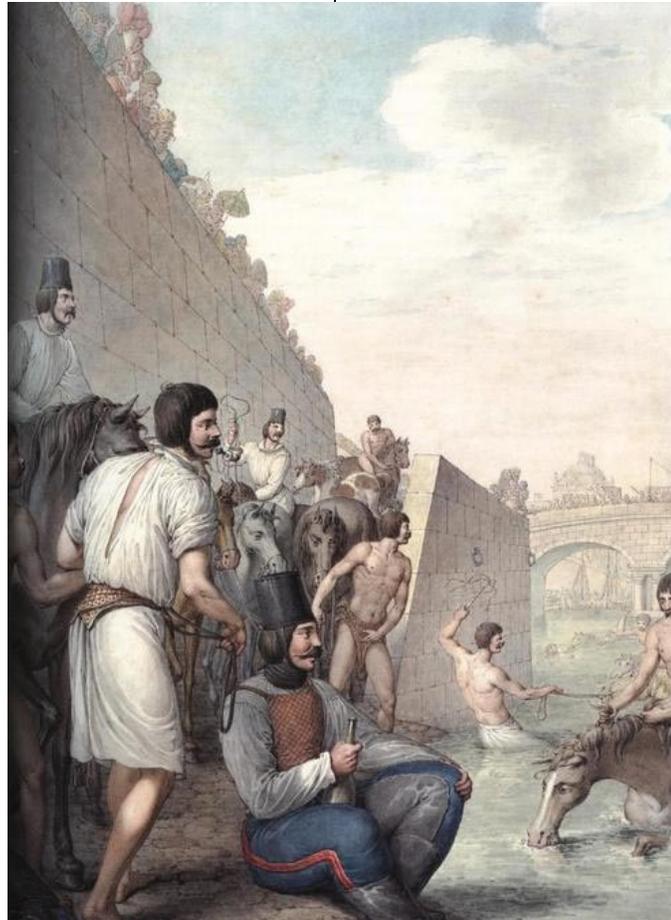
¹⁰ Orlov, "Kapitulyatsiya Parizha," 639.

Napoleon to Prince Schwarzenberg informing the Field Marshal that peace was on the eve of being concluded with the Emperor of Austria, and requesting him as commander-in-chief, to halt the attack on Paris.

Alexander and Frederick William met Delapointe and Nesselrode on the hill of St. Chaumont and, after perusing Napoleon's letter, refused to pay any attention to it; a Russian officer bluntly states, "it was clearly a lie, a lion trying to put on a fox's hide."¹¹ At 7 p.m., Nesselrode, equipped with new set of instructions, traveled to the barrier of La Villette. The Allied sovereigns told him not to insist on the surrender of the French troops and offer marshals to retreat, but only by the route to Bretagne so as to avoid their joining Napoleon who was approaching Fontainebleau. Visibly irritated by such constraint, Marmont replied that Paris was not surrounded and that consequently his troops should be able to retire in any direction; if prevented, he threatened to defend Paris inch by inch and then retreat to Fontainebleau. "Fortune has favored you," he told the Allied negotiators, "your success is certain; be at once magnanimous and moderate, and do not push your demands to extremity."¹² With neither side willing to compromise, negotiations continued until 8 p.m. Marshal Mortier finally announced that he must return to his troops, and left the decision to Marmont, who, remaining alone, kept firmly to his purpose. With darkness already preventing the Allies from renewing the attack, Nesselrode and

Orlov requested new instructions from the Allied monarchs, who finally agreed to the terms of capitulation without insisting on prescribing a route to the enemy's troops. Within a quarter of an hour Orlov drew up the articles of capitulation, which were signed, after Marmont had read them aloud, pausing at almost every word. Among eight provisions, the first, and the most important one, proclaimed the surrender of the French capital, with the French troops pledging to evacuate it by 7 a.m. on 31 March.¹³

Early in the morning on 31 March, Emperor Alexander mounted the Eclipse, a horse presented to him by a French ambassador six years before, and prepared for the moment of his lifetime. He rode with his staff to King Frederick William's headquarters at Pantin and the two sovereigns then led the Allied troops into Paris. Nesselrode was struck by "a well-dressed crowd covering boulevards. It seemed as if people gathered for a festivity, rather than to



Russian troops bathing in the Seine River (by Georg-Emmanuel Opitz)

¹³ The surrender terms included: Marshals agreed to evacuate Paris on the following morning, by seven o'clock. Hostilities would not recommence till two hours after the French departure. The arsenals and magazines to be given up in the state they were at the signing of the capitulation. The national guards and the gendarmes to be separated from the troops of the line, and at the pleasure of the Allies, to be either disbanded, or employed as before, on garrison duty, and the service of the police. The wounded and stragglers found, after ten o'clock in the morning, to be considered as prisoners of war. Paris is confided to the generosity of the Monarchs. For Russian version of the text see Orlov, "Kapitulyatsiya Parizha," 654-655.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 641.

¹² *Ibid.*, 641.

witness the entry of enemy troops."¹⁴ Alexander Mikhailovsky-Danilevsky, the famous Russian historian who escorted Emperor Alexander that day, remembered that "a countless multitude [of people] crowded the streets, and the roofs and windows of the houses."¹⁵ Etienne-Denis Pasquier, who served as Napoleon's prefect of police since 1810, recalled that "an enormous concourse of people had wended its way since morning to every point of the road along which the strangers were to pass. The Faubourg Saint-Denis and the boulevards swarmed with them; the crowd was silent and cast down, and awaited the course of events with great anxiety."¹⁶ Alphonse de Lamartine described streets swarming with the populace, some hoping for a riot:

*"[Upon the appearance of the Russian officers,] the people of the quarter of the Bastille arose in a tumult, and uttered, in sign of defiance, shouts of "Vive Bonaparte !" Some armed men rushed out of the crowd towards an aide-de-camp of the Emperor Alexander, who was going to prepare his quarters. "Come on, Frenchmen!" cried these desperate fellows. "The Emperor Napoleon is coming! Let us destroy the enemy!" The people, however, were deaf to the cry. The National Guard interposed, protected the detachment, and raised up a few wounded officers. The heads of the foreign columns soon after appeared on the Boulevards."*¹⁷

Starting around 9 a.m., the Allied columns, with colors unfurled, drums beating and music playing began a triumphant entry into Paris. The Russian cavalry, with the Life Guard Cossack Regiment and Grand Duke Constantine at its head, led the way and Lamartine thought they represented "barbarous war evoked from the deserts of the north to spread over the south." Another spectator observed that the "physiognomy of the Russian troops" indicated strongly the different nations to

which they belonged. Indeed, Thomas Richard Underwood, an Englishman visiting the French capital, saw the streets thronged with

*"People of every description... inhabitants of all the north of Europe, and the Asiatic subjects of the Russian empire, from the Caspian Sea to the Wall of China, were riding about; Cossacks, with their sheep-skin jackets, sandy-coloured, shaggy beards, long lances... Calmucks, and different Tartar tribes, with their flat noses, little eyes, and dark reddish-brown skins; Baschkins and Tungusians of Siberia, armed with bows and arrows; Tscherkess or Circassian noblemen from the foot of Mount Caucasus, clad in complete hauberks of steel mail, perfectly bright, and conical helmets, similar in form to those worn in England in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries."*¹⁸

Behind the Russian cavalry came Alexander, King Frederick William of Prussia, Field Marshal Carl von Schwartzberg, accompanied by their generals and enormous suite, and followed by the tens of thousands of Allied soldiers.¹⁹ Writing to the Russian Empress Consort Elisaveta Alekseevna, Cossack Ataman Matvei Platov informed her that "I have no words to describe today's celebration but I humbly inform Your Majesty that never such an event had taken place in preceding centuries, and there would be hardly any to rival it in the future. There was indescribable excitement on both sides, accompanied by shouts of numerous throngs of people of Paris: "Long Live Emperor Alexander who brought peace and prosperity to Europe!"²⁰ A staff captain in Russian Imperial Suite was equally awe struck by the radiance of the moment, noting "both we and the residents of Paris took pleasure in this inexpressible joy: they because of freedom from a heavy yoke, we because of finishing a war in such a brilliant manner... With a beautiful weather that day, streets were full of numerous people from dawn till late evening."²¹ A journalist writing in the *Journal des Debats*, a royalist daily publication in

¹⁴ Cited in Nikolai Shilder, *Imperator Alexander: ego zhizhn i tsarstvovanie* (St. Petersburg, 1905) III, 210.

¹⁵ Alexander Mikhailovskii-Danilevskii, *Zapiski 1814 i 1815 godov* (St. Petersburg, 1836), 42.

¹⁶ Etienne-Denis Pasquier, *A History of My Time: Memoirs of Chancellor Pasquier* (New York, 1894), II, 269.

¹⁷ Alphonse de Lamartine, *Histoire de la Restauration* (Paris, 1853), I, 163.

¹⁸ Thomas Richard Underwood, *A Narrative of Memorable Events in Paris in 1814* (Londown, 1828), 155-156.

¹⁹ *Journal des Débats*, 3 April 1814, page 3.

²⁰ Platov to Empress Elizaveta Alekseevna, 2 April 1814, *Rossiiskii arkhiv* (Moscow, 1996), VII, 188.

²¹ Alexander Mikhailovsky-Danilevsky, "O prebyvanii russkikh v Parizhe v 1814 godu", in *Russkii vestnik*, 1819, No. 9/10, 21.

Paris, described the Allied entry into Paris as “the most amazing spectacle in the history of the world.”²² A Russian participant added with bravado,

“The French, who had pictured to themselves the Russians as worn out, by long campaigns and hard fighting, as speaking a language altogether unknown to them, and dressed in a wild outlandish fashion, could hardly believe their eyes, when they saw the smart Russian uniforms, the glittering arms, the joyous expression of the men, their healthy countenances, and the kind deportment of the officers. The sharp repartees of the latter, in the French language, completed their astonishment. “You are not Russians,” said they to us, “you are surely émigrés.” A short time, however, served to convince them of the contrary, and the report of the, to them incredible, accomplishments of the conquerors, flew from mouth to mouth. The praises of the Russians knew no bounds; the women from the windows and balconies welcomed us, by waving their handkerchiefs and from one end of Paris the cry of “Long live Alexander! Long live the Russians!” was uttered by a million of voices.”²³

Count Louis-Victor-Léon de Rochechouart, a French émigré who served in the Russian army, noted that “Napoleon’s latest reports had represented [the Allied] army as exhausted, disorganized and reduced to inefficiency... [Now] this display of overwhelming force seemed to make a great impression on the Parisians. The most numerous and brilliant staff ever assembled

²² *Journal des Débates*, 3 April 1814, page 3.

²³ Mikhailovskii-Danilevskii, *Zapiski 1814 i 1815 godov*, 43-44.

completed the picture. Add to this, an electrified crowd, shouts from more than a hundred thousand voices, “Long live the Emperor Alexander! Long live the King of Prussia! Long live the King! Long live the Allies! Long live our Deliverers,” mingled with words of command in Russian and German, the sound of carriages and horses, the tramp of infantry; the scene is indescribable.”²⁴ But not all Russian officers were enthralled by public elation.

Later that day Pavel Pushin, an officer in the Life Guard

Semeyonovskii

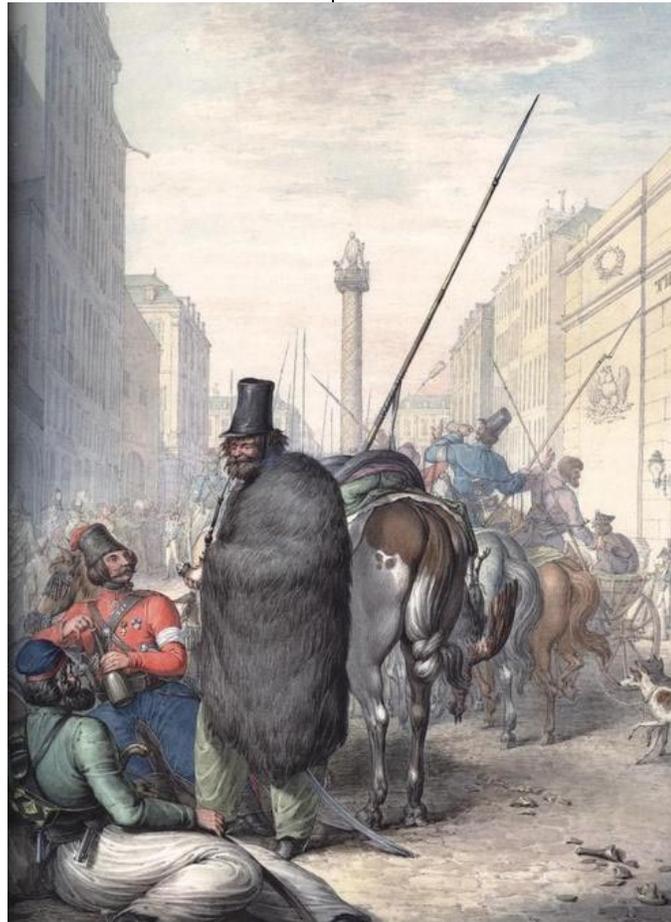
Regiment, recorded in his diary, “Crowds of onlookers increased as we advanced into the city and all of them expressed genuine happiness, shouting ‘Vive Alexander! Vive King of Prussia! Vive Bourbons!’ But can we really believe any of this? Just yesterday these same people were yelling ‘Vive Napoleon.’”²⁵

Emperor Alexander seems to have perfectly played his role of a gracious conqueror. One can only imagine what he felt at that moment, he who had experienced

the crushing defeats of Austerlitz and Friedland, the humiliating peace at Tilsit and the burning of Moscow. In 1814, he experienced quite a few restless moments as his alliance with Austria showed signs of strain. Now, as the Allied troops

²⁴ Louis-Victor-Léon de Rochechouart, *Memoirs...* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co, 1920), 281-282. Similar sentiment in Pavel Pushin’s diary: “The Parisians were truly stunned by this spectacle. They were assured that only a small blundering column of our troops was marching on Paris, but now they saw a powerful army of splendid appearance in front of them.” Pavel Pushin, *Dnevnik* (Leningrad, 1987), 154.

²⁵ Pushin, 154.



Russian Cossacks at the Place Vendôme (by Georg-Emmanuel Opitz)

marched in front of him in the streets of Paris, Alexander told one of his generals, pointing slightly at Prince Schwarzenberg, "Because of this chubby man [*tolstyak*] I spent many sleepless nights." After a brief pause he then added, "What are people going to say now in St. Petersburg? There was a time when some extolled Napoleon and took me for a simpleton."²⁶ But now, all that was in the past, and Alexander was on the top of the world. Enormous crowds greeted him in the capital of his greatest enemy, and, according to a Russian officer, "Parisians were all asking one question, 'Where is Emperor Alexander?'" Pestered by such inquiries, another officer kept responding "cheval blanc, panache blanc [look for white horse, white plume]."²⁷ Seeing the Russian emperor, the people began yelling "Here he is, here is Alexander! How graciously he is bowing his head! Long Live Emperor Alexander! Long Live Peace!" Alexander was periodically stopped by Parisians wanting to tell him something. When one of them told the Emperor that Parisians had been long expecting his arrival, Alexander courteously replied, "I would have arrived earlier but the gallantry of your troops held me up."²⁸ Indeed, "Alexander's noble mien, his affable and kindly manners, and the care he continually took to urge upon all those surrounding him not to give offence, created a very favorable impression," recorded one Frenchman.²⁹ His conclusions are echoed in a Russian officer's recollections: "The crowd soon became prodigious: indeed, it was hardly possible to make one's way on horseback. The inhabitants kept constantly stopping our horses, and launching out in praise of Alexander; but they rarely alluded to the other Allies. Emboldened by the affability of the Emperor, they began to wish for a change of government, and to proclaim the Bourbons. White cockades appeared in the hats, and white handkerchiefs in the air; people crowded round His Majesty, requesting that he would remain in France. "Reign over us," said they, "or give us a Monarch

²⁶ Modest Bogdanovich, *Istoriya tsarstvovaniya imperatora Aleksandra I i Rossii v ego vremya* (St. Petersburg, 1869) IV, 507. Bogdanovich notes that he heard it from Yermolov himself.

²⁷ Mikhailovskii-Danilevskii, *Zapiski 1814 i 1815 godov*, 44.

²⁸ Bogdanovich, 508.

²⁹ Pasquier, II, 270.

like you."³⁰ Some royalists printed and distributed Alexander's portraits inscribed "d'un vainqueur généraux la sagesse profonde, Rend la France à ses rois, donne la paix au monde."³¹ Although he already began to look upon himself as an instrument of Providence, Alexander publicly claimed no credit for himself and sought to demonstrate his humility and contrast himself with Napoleon. When a young man in the streets of Paris expressed to him his admiration at the affability with which he received the least of the citizens, he replied "For what else are sovereigns made?" He refused to inhabit the Tuileries, remembering that Napoleon had taken his ease in the palaces of Vienna, Berlin and Moscow. Looking at the statue of Napoleon on the column in the Place Vendome, he said "If I were so high up, I should be afraid of becoming giddy." As he was going over the Palace of the Tuileries, they showed him the Salon de la Paix: "Of what use," he asked, laughing, "was this room to Bonaparte?"³²

The Allied troops marched in front of magnificent buildings and monuments that Napoleon had built in the preceding years and finally reached the Elysian Fields, where Emperor Alexander halted and reviewed the troops which marched past him. A Russian officer saw how "the Parisians rushed from every quarter, to witness so novel a spectacle. The women requested us to dismount, and allow them to stand on the saddles, in order to have a better view of the Emperor." Noticing some of these women standing on saddles, Alexander pointed them out to Frederick William and Prince Schwarzenberg, the latter quipping, "I fear this may lead to another abduction of the Sabine women."³³ Mikhailovsky-Danilevsky described (with expected exaggeration), "The parade began with the Austrian troops, between whose ranks the people crowded, in spite of the utmost efforts of the gendarmes; but the moment the Russian grenadiers and foot-guards appeared, the French were so struck with their truly military

³⁰ Mikhailovskii-Danilevskii, *Zapiski 1814 i 1815 godov*, 44.

³¹ Schilder, III, 428.

³² Francois René Chateaubriand, *Memoirs...* (London, 1902), III, 61.

³³ Cited in Schilder, III, 213; Bogdanovich, 509.

exterior, that they did not require even to be told to clear the way: all at once, as if by a secret unanimous consent, they retired far beyond the line traced for the spectators. They gazed, with silent admiration, on the guards and grenadiers, and allowed that their army, even at the most brilliant epoch of the Empire, was never in such order as were these two corps, after our three immortal campaigns."

As the Allied troops reached the inner, more upscale, districts of Paris, the royalist sentiments became more visible. That morning Comtesse de Boigne saw her old acquaintance Prince Volkonsky, Alexander ADC, who told her that having passed through the streets of outlying districts, he had met on his road nothing but demonstrations of grief and anxiety, and not a sign of joy and hope. But when the comtesse herself ventured out into the streets, she "saw on the pavement of the boulevard a number of young men walking past, wearing the white cockade, waving their handkerchiefs, and shouting "Vive le Roi!" but there were very few of them.... we still hoped that the band would increase. [But] they dared not advance beyond the Rue Napoleon [and] proceeding to the Madeleine, they retraced their steps. We saw the band pass five times, but were unable to cheat ourselves with the hope that it had grown larger. Our anxiety became greater and greater..."³⁴ Antoine Marie Chamant Lavalette was upset to see "numerous Frenchmen, whom our armies had never seen in their ranks.... eager to welcome [Alexander] to the metropolis, and to lay at his feet the homage and joy of the French people." He saw "women dressed out as for a *fete*, and almost frantic with joy, waving their pocket handkerchiefs and crying "Long live the Emperor Alexander!" To his surprise, some of these women were married to senior officials in the Napoleonic government.³⁵

³⁴ Comtesse de Boigne, *Memoires* (London, 1907), I, 246.

³⁵ Antoine Marie Chamant Lavalette, *Mémoires et souvenirs* (Paris, 1905), 299. "About the same time, a gathering formed on the Place Louis XV.; it was composed of a small number of youthful Royalists, who bore the most honored names of the French nobility; they did not hesitate to don the white cockade. A few ladies, who were at the windows overlooking the Place, encouraged this action by their applause, and quickly

According to the *Journal des Débats*, the Allied entry was accompanied "everywhere by the signs of unambiguous sentiments of the inhabitants of the capital. Everywhere they spoke to the troops, they got along and have but one sentiment: hatred for their oppressors and the desire to return the legitimate authority that had been tested by the centuries and was the only worthy one of France and Europe... that of the princes of the house of Bourbon, this majestic august house which had brought happiness and true glory to France for centuries." ³⁶ Some of Emperor Alexander's actions and words further intensified such sentiments. Rochechouart describes an incident, when "a young woman contrived—how I know not—to raise herself on to one of the stirrups of the Tsar, [and] shouted frantically in his ear: 'Vive l'Empereur Alexandre.' The Sovereign took hold of her hands to keep her from falling, and said in his gracious manner: "Madame, cry 'Vive le Roi,' and I will cry it with you."³⁷ But the majority of Parisians remained aloof to royalist sentiments. Duc de Fitz-James' attempts to rally a battalion of the National Guard with the cry of Vive le Roi! did nothing to impassive faces of its soldiers, while Sosthène de la Rochefoucauld's effort to organize a royalist demonstration on Place Louis XV produced a paltry group of about dozen men.³⁸ Later that day Sosthène de la Rochefoucauld, shouting "à bas Napoléon," led a group of royalists to bring down Napoleon's statue on top of the Vendome Column. Despite their attempts – one of them even climbed

distributed white favors among those who were willing to wear them in their hats. The young men proceeded along the Boulevard de la Madeleine, marching towards the sovereigns. Their number grew as they progressed. They met the Emperor Alexander and the King of Prussia near the Boulevard des Italiens; at that point were heard loud cries of: *Long live the Bourbons! Long live the sovereigns! Long live the Emperor Alexander!* Among the women at the windows, many waved white handkerchiefs, and took up these cries, which greeted the sovereigns all along the road to the Champs-Élysées, where they tarried a while to witness the filing past of their troops." Pasquier, II, 270.

³⁶ *Journal des Débats*, 3 April 1814, page 3

³⁷ Rochechouart, *Memoirs*, 282.

³⁸ Louis François Sosthènes de la Rochefoucauld Doudeauville, *Memoires...* (Paris:Allardin, 1837), I, 45-47. Also see Gilbert Stenger, *Retour des Bourbons* (Paris, Plon-Nourrit, 1908), 126-128.

onto the state and “kept slapping it on the cheeks”³⁹ - they were unable to remove the statue before the arrival of a patrol of the Life Guard Semeyonovskii Regiment, which Alexander sent to safeguard the monument.⁴⁰

The parade review ended about five o'clock in the afternoon, when Alexander retired to the house of Charles Maurice Perigord de Talleyrand, where he resided during the early period of his stay at Paris. A part of the Russian troops mounted guard, and the rest took up the quarters assigned them in the town. These were the best days for the Russian sovereign and his presence elevated European esteem of Russia to hitherto unprecedented heights. The behavior of Russian troops was meticulously regulated by Alexander himself, who intended to insure and maintain Russian prestige. According to Yakov Otroshenko from the 14th Jagers, “many Frenchmen asked us what we are going to with Paris, are we going to burn it like the French did with Moscow?”⁴¹ To allay such fears, Alexander assured the deputations of Paris that no looting or damaging of property would be tolerated. “I have but one enemy in France, and this enemy is the man who has deceived me in the most infamous fashion, who has abused my confidence, who has violated all his sworn pledges to me, who has carried into my dominions the most iniquitous and outrageous war,” he declared. “All other Frenchmen are my friends. I esteem France and Frenchmen, and my desire is that they will act so as to enable me to do them some good. I honor the courage and the glory of all the brave men against whom I have fought for the past two years, and I have learnt to hold them in high regard whatever has been their conditions. I will ever be ready to render him that justice and those honors due to them. Go, therefore, gentlemen, and tell the Parisians that I am not entering their city as an enemy, and that it depends on them to

³⁹ A. Mikhailovsky-Danilevsky, “O prebyvanii russkikh v Parizhe v 1814 g.” *Russkii vestnik*, 9(1819): 13-14.

⁴⁰ I. Lazhechnikov, *Pokhodnye zapiski russkogo ofitsera* (Moscow, 1836), 203-204; Otroshenko, *Zapiski*, 85-86; N. Kovalskii, “Iz zapisok pokoinago general maiora N.P. Kovalskago,” *Russkii vestnik*, 91(1871): 112.

⁴¹ Yakov Otroshenko, *Zapiski general Otroshenko* (Moscow: Bratina, 2006), 85.

have me for a friend...”⁴² As the tripartite government of the capital was established, Russian General Baron Fabian Osten-Sacken became military governor-general and a Russian, Austrian and Prussian commandant each had four *arrondissements* to police. The Russian troops were instructed “to treat locals most benevolently and to overwhelm them with our generosity, rather than vengeance, and to avoid imitating French behavior in Russia.”⁴³

Imagine what these officers felt that evening. Their diaries and memoirs reveal sense of elation, thrill and excitement that prevented them from sleeping. Most of them probably shared the sentiment expressed by Ivan Lazhechnikov, “What would you have said, oh the esteemed Capets, the founders of the French states, and you Henri, the father of your nation, and you, the Sun-like Louis XIV? What would you have felt, Sullys, Colberts, Turrennes, Racines, Voltaires, you, the glory of your Fatherland? What would you have said, when upon awakening from the deathly slumber, you would have heard the joyous ‘hurrah’ of Slavs on the heights of Montmartre?”⁴⁴ Among officers who could not sleep that night was Mikhailovsky-Danilevsky, who, around midnight, decided to walk in the streets:

“All lights were extinguished and no light could be seen in the Tuilleries Palace either. This ancient edifice, which served as the palace for the Bourbons, the assembly place of the republican governments and later the palace of the ruler of the wealthiest countries of Europe – but a building which Emperor Alexander did not deem worthy of his stay – was guarded by a Russian guard post. Amidst the midnight silence, I reached Palais Royal, where all parties, that reigned over France in the last 25 years, had first tested their powers. In the gardens and galleries I could see thousands of Parisians, carried away by various passions and thoughts. Some looked up into the sky and sighed heavily, but most gathered around various speakers. Some of them praised the Bourbons, under whose royal scepter their ancestors lived for

⁴² Pasquier, *A History of My Time*, II, 261.

⁴³ Ilya Radozhitsky, *Pokhodnye zapiski artillerista s 1812 po 1816 g* (Moscow, 1835), III, 31.

⁴⁴ Lazhechnikov, *Pokhodnye zapiski*, 189.

centuries; others extolled their past victories [under Napoleon] and thought it prudent to do nothing drastic while awaiting for the arrival of the Emperor at the head of his army. What I saw here gave me first and real understanding of revolutionary events and people's gatherings. Despite the diversity of their opinions, they all respected a Russian uniform: I walked throughout Palais Royal, stopped by the crowds of Parisians and was everywhere met with great courtesy."

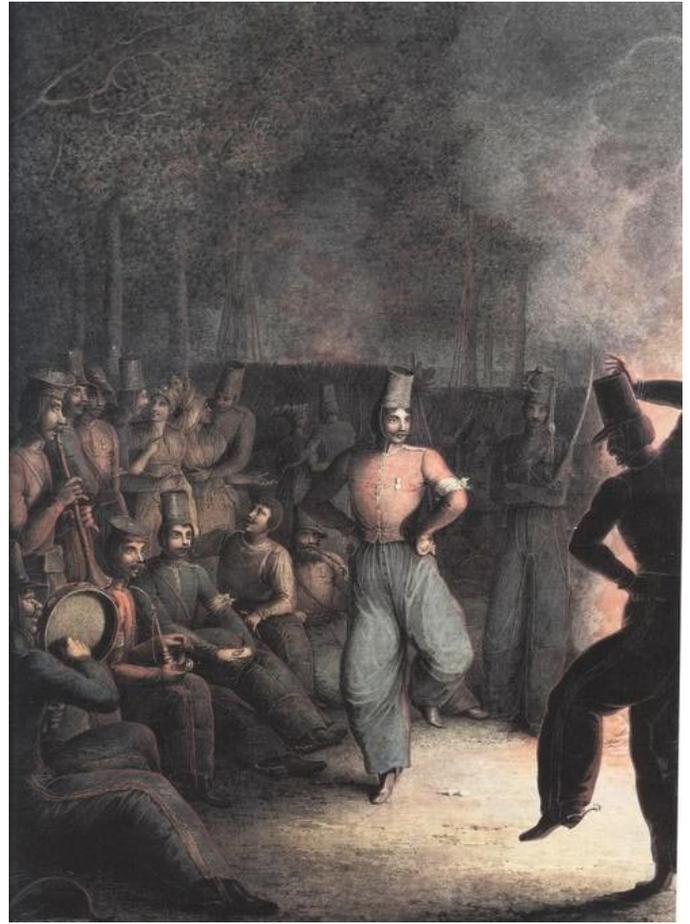
As he returned home walking along deserted streets, Mikhailovsky-Danilevsky was happy to note that "not a sound was heard in the streets of Paris, save for the call of the Russian sentries." As the new day dawned, General Alexander Osterman-Tolstoy's adjutant I. Lazhechnikov noted that "the Cossacks have set up their camps on the Champs Elysees: a sight worthy of the pencil of [Alexander] Orlovski⁴⁵ himself and of attention of observers of twists-and-turns of earthly life: where a Parisian dandy used to give fresh flowers to his beauty and blissfully trembled upon receiving glances of her caring eyes, now a Bashkir, in an enormous smoked hat and with long mustaches, stands near a bonfire and grills his beefsteak on the tip of his arrow..."⁴⁶ Thomas Richard Underwood was also struck to see "The barracks of the Quai Buonaparte filled with Russian cavalry and infantry. Under the walls of the quai, on the banks of the river, a considerable body of Russian soldiers were bivouacking; round the blazing fires many were sleeping, some were washing their linen, others cooking. Several, entirely naked, were cleansing themselves..."⁴⁷ Nikolai Kovalskii recounts an amusing story of a certain Yurko, who served with him in the elite Leib-Dragoonkii Regiment and was a known drunkard. Upon his arrival to Paris, Yurko came across a pharmacy. "There he frightened an apothecary with his fierce black-dyed moustaches and somehow sniffed out a bottle with a [medical] alcohol, which emptied while snacking on an onion and left contently rubbing his stomach. The dumbfounded apothecary soon came running to our barracks, swearing to us

⁴⁵ Alexander Orlovski was a prominent Russian painter (of Polish origin), one of the pioneers of lithography in Russia.

⁴⁶ Lazhechnikov, *Pokhodnye zapiski*, 205.

⁴⁷ Underwood, *A Narrative of Memorable Events*, 119

that he had no responsibility for the imminent death of our comrade but Yurko did not even blink [v us sebe ne dul.]⁴⁸



Cossacks dancing at their camps on the Camps Elysses
(by Georg-Emmanuel Opitz)

Over the next few days, as the Allied army settled down, Russian officers began exploring the city all of them had heard about but very few had actually visited. In the first days of occupation, the annual salary was doubled and paid in full for three previous campaigns (1812, 1813, 1814) at once⁴⁹ and so eating, drinking and gambling⁵⁰ were on the top of everyone's list. "It rather shameful," wrote M. Muromtsev, "but except for the Musée Napoleon, I have seen nothing in Paris because of I was

⁴⁸ Kovalskii, "Iz zapisok," 113..

⁴⁹ "Iz rasskazov starogo leib-gusara," *Russkii arkhiv*, 3 (1887), 194.

⁵⁰ For accounts of gambling see Kazakov, *Pokhod vo Frantsiyu v 1814 godu*, 358-359; *Vyderzhki iz voyennykh zapisok i vospominanii...* 93.

drinking, eating and having fun.”⁵¹ Food was cheap and, as Kovalskii notes, Russian officers “were granted large credits at shops and restaurants.”⁵² Chertkov’s diary shows that “officers received 5 francs a day while staff officers – 10 francs... [At Palais Royal], one could order a lunch from any six dishes and pay a moderate some of 1 franc and 50 *santimes*.”⁵³ In the restaurants of Palais Royal, the officers were “awed by splendid rooms, beautiful furniture, and servants in opulent livery as well as fine dishes, crystals and table cloth. [We were served] exquisite dishes and wines, all served cleanly and nicely... Crowds of Frenchmen entered rooms to gaze at us as if we were wonders. They were surprised that we spoke French among ourselves.”⁵⁴ “The French look at us as if we came from a different, completely unknown world,” marveled another officer. “They feared” writes Mikhailovsky-Danilevsky, “that we were Northern barbarians while Cossacks are wild and half-naked savages who skin their prisoners and cook and eat small children whenever they find them in villages.” So, continues Ivan Lazhechnikov, “our colorful uniforms, hats and plumes... neatness and uniformity of our clothing had a great effect on [the French]... They were particularly struck by the fact that some of our officers are fluent in French and speak it as easily as the French. As soon as a single French word is uttered by one of us, we are immediately surrounded by a crowd of onlookers who incessantly asking thousands of questions, many of them quite obtuse and revealing great ignorance.”⁵⁵

All participants recalled fondly interacting with Parisians, especially with street vendors and merchants. Ensign I. Kazakov of the LG Semeyonovskii Regiment wrote in his memoirs that “both officers and soldiers enjoyed great life in

⁵¹ Matvei Muromtsev, “Vospominaniya,” *Russkii arkhiv*, 3(1890), 381. According to Lorer, during the parade review on the first day of occupation, some officers even managed to escape from the ranks to have a lunch in the Palais Royal. Lorer, *Zapiski*, 313.

⁵² Kovalskii, “Iz zapisok,” 115.

⁵³ Chertkov, *Dnevnik*, 421-422.

⁵⁴ Nikolai Bronevskii, “Iz vospominanii...” *Golos minuvshogo*, 3(1914): 233-235

⁵⁵ Lazhechnikov, *Pokhodnye zapiski*, 202-203.

Paris; an idea that we were in an enemy city did not even cross our mind. [The Parisians] loved our soldiers... there was always a crowd of people near our barracks and young peddler women, with packages on their shoulders and vodka, snacks and sweet in hand, crowded around our soldiers on the *quai*.”⁵⁶ “Our camps turned into bazaars,” recalled Bronevski,

“Anything one could desire was brought there; there was hardly any bargain and sellers took whatever money was offered. Of course, everything seemed inexpensive to us. And where else can you find such an abundance of oranges, lemons, apples, fresh grapes, various candies, wines in full bottles and half bottles, porter, liqueur, different pirogues, patties, oysters, cheese, rolls, in a word, you could have found anything you had ever desired.” In the days to come, “we saw carriages with women arriving at our camp. They moved around freely and if our officers, who could speak the French, approached them, they talked to them tenderly and treated them to oranges. Our officers then generously brought out scarves full of oranges, apples, sweets and gave them to women. Acquaintances were made within an hour. We were allowed to go to the city, but were required to wear our uniforms, maintain cleanliness and be always courteous and benevolent. Soldiers were prohibited to leave camps alone. In short, we felt as if we were in Moscow, St. Petersburg... All passer-byes bowed to us and we replied to them with same courtesies. We visited churches, prayed to God and everyone looked at us with wonder. In theaters, most seats were occupied by our officers...”⁵⁷

“In general, the Parisians’ nature is a tempest of all passions,” observed Petrov from the 1st Jagers. “Here, at every step, especially on the boulevards and on the Champs Elysees, one can find any type of entertainment. You can find trained beasts, birds, fish and reptiles, various magic, phantasmagorias, panoramas and magic lanterns, or dances on balancing wires and ropes or colourful Chinese

⁵⁶ I. Kazakov. “Pokhod vo Frantsiyu v 1814 godu.” *Russkaya starina*, 5 (1908): 356-357.

⁵⁷ Bronevskii, “Iz vospominanii...” 233-235. For a fascinating description of the Palais Royal, see “Vyderzhki iz voyennykh zapisok i vospominanii sluzhivogo prezhnikh vremen: zanyatie Parizhav 1814 godu,” *Atenei* 1(1859), 89, 93; Chertkov, *Dnevnik*, 422.

items which burn at the pleasant sounds of harmonica with particularly bewitching beauty of colors and glimmers.”⁵⁸ Russian officers were particularly surprised by the Parisian love for theater. Alexander Chertkov’s diary provides a fascinating account of attending a theater play:

“These theaters are so packed in the evenings that if you are late by half an hour, there will be no seat left for you. Such is the Parisians’ passion for theater. An enormous crowd of people gathers before the theater ticket booths open and await in theater vestibules. But if a new play or one on a current issue is staged or if the king or other august person attends it, then one has to come to the theater three or four hours before the curtain is raised. Just imagine that after experiencing all these difficulties, you enter the hall, find your seat and then spend next three or four hours sitting, constrained by your neighbors’ elbows, suffocating from unbearable heat, and

forced to give up your space three or four times (especially if you are in front seats) to women

who are in habit of coming late... Even if the curtain has finally been raised and you think that everything will be fine now and you will now enjoy performances of the best French actors, your hopes will be soon dashed: aside from deafening applause which will always distract you at the most interesting moments, if nature calls and you have to leave the hall for a few minutes or if, during entr’acte, you want some fresh air, then you must be

assured that upon returning back you will find your hat thrown on the floor and your place occupied. Then you have to choose one from two solutions: you either challenge a man who took your seat, which will inevitably end with an appointment in the Bois de Boulogne (which happened to many our officers) or you decide to leave the hall, which is more prudent since, in the end, does a human life mean so little so as to have yourself killed over a seat in a theater?”⁵⁹



Russian officers entertaining themselves in Paris (by Georg-Emmanuel Opitz)

Enthralled by Paris, many officers spent hours every day walking in the streets. Thus, Pavel Pushin’s diary, which is rather illustrative of other officers’ experiences, records that on 2-4 April, Pushin used his very first break to visit Hotel des Invalides, Arc de Triomphe (Carrousel), Notre Dame Cathedral, the Pantheon, Botanical Garden, Pont d’Austerlitz, Theater Francais, the Louvre, Theatre des Variétés, and Palais Royal (repeatedly). Zhirkevich explained

that his “leisure time was spent in visiting places of attracting in Paris in the morning,

starting with the Louvres and ending with the Chinese baths, which had nothing Chinese in them except the name. Above all I enjoyed the Botanical

⁵⁹ Alexander Chertkov, “Mon journal de Voyage...” in 1812-1814: *Iz sobraniya Gosudarstvennogo Istoricheskogo muzeya* (Moscow: Terra, 1992), 422-423. Chertkov listed eight Parisian theaters as the center of evening life: Le Théâtre Français, Le Grand Opéra, l’Odéon (or Théâtre de l’Impératrice), le Vaudeville, les Variétés, l’Opéra Comique (Théâtre Faydeau), Théâtre de la Gaieté, and l’Ambigu Comique.

⁵⁸ Petrov, Rasskazy, 270.

Gardens. My friends I usually had lunch... in the Palais Royal and other restaurants, and, in the evening, we always went to some theater."⁶⁰ At the Louvre, Radozhitsky found "one statue better than another" and was glad to see "a booklet with detailed description of each statue being sold at the entrance." Pushin was awestruck by the Louvre's collection which "will forever serve as a monument for this unordinary man. The works of art gathered here from all countries of Europe during last few years represent everything that is breathtaking in this world." A similar thought is expressed in the memoirs of Mikhail Petrov, "After visiting these art treasures numerous times, we each time expressed our gratitude to Napoleon for gathering so much in Paris, and for bringing us there from the northern regions to the banks of the Seine River."⁶¹ Another officer, S. Khomutov noted in his diary that on 1 April, he "spent the entire day moving around the city in cabriolet, fiacre, on horse and on foot, visiting the Pantheon, the Louvre, Tuilleries. But one day is just not enough to see everything worthy of attention in this great, sophisticated and glorious city."⁶²

The presence of occupying force naturally produced frictions between the Allied soldiers and the French. "It was as easy to recognize the French officers by their sombre countenances as by their uniforms," remarks one Russian officer,

"They conducted themselves more politely towards the Russians than to the other allies, with whom they had frequent quarrels which ended in duels. The Russians were the chief objects of their hatred, and hardly a day passed in which blood did not flow on one side or the other. The German officers, although the neighbors of the French, had more difficulty in conforming to their manners, customs, and language, than the Russians. At this time we received permission to wear plain clothes, in which we appeared in society as ordinary citizens. The Prussians and Austrians, on the contrary, continued to

⁶⁰ Zhirkevich, Zapisiki, 655.

⁶¹ Radozhitsky, *Pokhodnye zapiski*, 130; Pushin, *Dnevnik*, 156; M.M. Petrov, "Rasskazy..." in *Vospominaniya voinov russkoi armii* (Moscow, 1991), 285. Also see N. Muravyev-Karskii, "Zapiski..." *Russkii arkhiv*, 2 (1886): 111.

⁶² S. Khomutov, "Iz Dnevnika svitskago ofitsera," *Russkii arkhiv*, 6(1870): 164-165.

*walk about in uniform. We may add, with perfect truth, that they did not try to adorn their triumph with modesty. The Austrians have a custom of wearing green branches in their caps and hats, which gave offence to the French, who thought they represented laurels; and hence resulted quarrels, and even murders. On the contrary, the Parisians were highly gratified by our wearing a white band round the left arm, and by our adding a white knot to our cockades. This apparently trifling circumstance turned the current of public opinion in our favor, and served as a bond of union between us."*⁶³

Nevertheless, many duels took place during the months the Russian army occupied Paris, both among Russian officers and between Russians and the French. Thus, Liprandi tells a story about a Russian officer, Bartenev, who replied wittily to the French officers out to insult him personally and the Russian army in general:

*Being a lieutenant known for his bravery in the Aleksandriiskii Hussar Regiment, in 1814 in Paris he had an equally famous duel with three French officers who asked why hussars have black feathers on their hats while other Russians also have rooster's feathers, like his, but white ones. Bartenev very politely explained that it is infantry that wears the black ones and cavalry the white, and that the feathers come not from roosters but from the French eagles that they have plucked [que nous avons épluchée]."*⁶⁴

After months of campaigning, the Russian officers, like any others, were starved for a female company and Paris provided them with plenty of entertainment. Palais Royal had plenty of sporting houses and the number of ladies of the evening surprised some Russian officers. "They walk in

⁶³ Mikhailovsky-Danilevsky, *History of the Campaign in France*, 402. One of the places of attractions in Paris was the famous Pont d'Austerlitz, which Napoleon built in commemoration of his great victory in December 1805. Now, in 1814, some Parisians sought to win over Alexander by erasing Imperial symbols and inscriptions on the bridge. However, as Otroshenko informs us, Emperor Alexander refused to give his consent for this, instead requesting to add just one more inscription on the bridge, noting that the Russian army crossed it in 1814. Otroshenko, *Zapiski*, 87-88.

⁶⁴ I.P. Liprandi, "Zamechaniya na 'Vospominaniya' F.F. Vigeliya," in *Chteniya v Imperatorskom obshchestve istorii i drevnostei rossiiskikh*, 1873, Book 1 (January-March): 141 (f.69)

groups of two or three, talking and laughing loudly, making such jokes that our ears cracked...," describe one officer while Ilya Radozhitskii recalled seeing these women "seducing our youngsters with their eyes and, if they got no response, they would pinch them sorely to get their attention."⁶⁵ Fedor Glinka writes with certain sarcasm, "Adieu my dear and delightful enchantresses... you, who sparkle in the Opera, stroll graciously on the boulevards or flutter in galleries and gardens of the Palais Royal! We will be sending you our passionate sighs from the banks of the Neva and Don. You never looked at our faces... A bearded Cossack and flat-faced Bashkir quickly became favorites of yours hearts if they had money! You always respected the clanking sound of virtue!"⁶⁶ But these relations oftentimes led to complications and many Russians, like their Allied brethren, soon contracted venereal diseases. Young officer Kazakov was lodged at the house of the famous Parisian physician Baron Guillaume Dupuytren, who befriended the Russian officer and one day took him to the Hotel-Dieu, showed him hospital rooms full of men with syphilis and made him promise to have no sex.⁶⁷

Reading these memoirs and diaries we see how much Russian officers were delighted by Paris which they describe as a pleasure and entertainment capital of the world. They were thrilled by artistic treasures of the capital, fascinated by the quality of food, and struck by freedom, one may even say frivolity, of Parisian women. But they were also disillusioned by France in general. Raised by French tutors, reading French literature and often speaking French better than Russian, they idealized this country since childhood and hoped to find an "earthly paradise" there. And even though Paris thrilled them, Russian officers were struck by widespread poverty, misery and economic hardship in the rest of the country. They were surprised to find Frenchmen from all social class rather ignorant of the world outside France, as well inconsiderate and boorish. Time and again, we

⁶⁵ *Vyderzhki iz voyennykh zapisok...*, 89-90; Radozhitskii, *Pokhodnye zapiski*, III, 127. For a Cossack viewpoint, see "Na chuzhbine sto let nazad," *Kazachii sbornik*, (Paris, 1930), 95.

⁶⁶ F. Glinka, *Pisma russkogo ofitsera* (Moscow, 1816), part 8, 170.

⁶⁷ Kazakov, *Pokhod vo Frantsiyuv 1814 godu*, 355.

see in memoirs references to grime and uncleanliness in French towns, causing one officer to remark that "the French have a national tendency to filthiness."⁶⁸ One officer states, "Many of our officers, who in the childhood were swayed by their foreign tutors and, hoping to find a promised land in France, were sorely disappointed upon seeing widespread poverty, ignorance and despair in villages and towns." Another commented, "The poverty around Langres is staggering; people are deprived of most necessities... Houses are cold and dirty..." A few days later, the same officer recorded in his diary, "A peasant's food consists of only warm water with a pig's fat and crumbled bread, which they call a soup. A [French] peasant is as ignorant as a Russian one, and is as poor as our peasants in Smolensk or Vitebsk," writes Pushin. More importantly, to many officers, the fact that the invasion of France unfolded "so easily" spoke of unpatriotic nature of the Frenchmen. They compared Russian resistance to Napoleon in 1812 to the French perceived "inaction" in 1814. This in turn led to reinforcement of the existing stereotypes of the Russian superiority, i.e. dedication, loyalty, patriotism, ability to sacrifice what's dear to one's heart (i.e. Moscow) in order to win the war.

⁶⁸ Radozhitskii, *Pokhodnye zapiski*, III, 45.