

The Polish Question: an Apple of Discord between Napoleon Bonaparte and Alexander I

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*“Poland was not worth
a single drop of French blood”*
Talleyrand¹

Poles and Napoleon. Polish legions

In time of the Napoleonic era, the Polish Question occupied an important place in the policy of the Great European Powers. The problem of Poland as a factor in international relations arose in Europe during the partitions of that country between the three powers – Prussia, Austria and Russia at the end of the 18th century.² However, the erasure of Poland from the maps of Europe did not solve the Polish Problem, more to the contrary; growing patriotism of Polish aristocracy and intelligentsia revived and vigorously reminded to European statesmen this matter of fact.

Many prominent Polish politicians who were active during the Kościuszko’s Uprising in 1794 became the backbone of Polish politics, both home and abroad, in the beginning of the 19th century. Hopes of these Poles were set above all upon to French. They believed that revolutionary France

1) S. ASKENAZY, *Napoleon a Polska*, Warszawa 1918, vol. II, p. 123.

2) See to the Partitions of Poland, H. KAPLAN, *The first Partition of Poland*, New York 1962; H. R. LORD, *The Second partition of Poland*, New York 1913; T. CEGIELSKI, L. KĄDZIELA, *Rozbiory Polski 1772-1793-1795*, Warszawa 1990; V. SAUTIN, *The First Partition of Poland*, in: *Prague Papers on the History of International Relations*, Prague 2009, pp. 119-143.

and its allies would come to the aid of Poland because they both had the same enemies: Austria, Prussia and Imperial Russia.

For the French government the Polish Question was not the key problem in the external political activity, but it attracted Napoleon Bonaparte's attention as early as the end of the 18th century and during the period of 1806-1812 with the expansion of the French Empire to the East, the role of the Polish problem in French external affairs and diplomacy was already quite significant.

The first time Napoleon Bonaparte turned to the Polish problem was in 1795 when the Poles submitted to him a project that called for the creation of Polish military units or legions composed of *Émigré* and Poles who had deserted from the armies that were opposing France.³ Bonaparte, himself kindled the hopes of the Polish patriots relative to French help in the restoration of their country. He spoke to his adjutant, the Pole Józef Sułkowsky: *"I love the Poles and attach great importance to them. The partition of Poland was an unfair act that does not have the right to become a permanent state of affairs. After the conclusion of the hostilities in Italy, I will go myself at the head of the French to defeat Russia and restore Poland. But the Poles must not count on foreign help alone, they must arm themselves...with pretty words alone nothing can be accomplished. A nation destroyed by its neighbors must take up arms itself."*⁴

However it was only in the 1797 that the French government agreed to the offer of the Poles and agreed to the creation of Polish Legions. In December 1796, Polish general and poet Jozef Wybicki persuaded the leaders of the Directory to form the first auxiliary Polish legion in Italy.⁵ Formally the Poles were accepted into service not by France but by the Republic of Lombardy, newly created by French bayonets. In 1797 the first Polish Legion was formed in Milan under the Command of Jan Henryk

Dąbrowski.⁶ His Manifesto addressed to Poles, and published in Italian, French and German periodicals, elicited a great response from the Polish *émigré* community. Soon Milan began to fill up with scores of volunteers in spite of the penalties enforced by the partitioning powers. The volunteers included patriotic *émigrés* as well as Polish prisoners released from the Austrian army. Within a short time, the Polish general gathered seven thousand potential troops, whom he turned into a disciplined army. They wore Polish uniforms, Italian epaulettes and French cockades, and marched to a song written by Jozef Wybicki which in the twentieth century became the Polish National Anthem.

In 1798, at Napoleon's instigation, Dąbrowski's Legion was soon joined by two more: in Italy by a second Polish legion under General Jozef Zajączek (1752-1826) and in Germany in 1800 by the *Légion du Rhin* under General Karol Kniaziewicz (1762-1842). The Poles who fought in the legions believed that after liberating Italy from Austrian and Bourbon rule they would march through Hungary into Galicia, from where they would launch an insurrection in Poland.⁷ However, these hopes were not to be fulfilled.

Napoleon never discussed his Polish plans except in the grandest of generalities, and conspicuously avoided any commitment which might have cramped his freedom of political action. It is significant that Kościuszko, who lived in Paris after his release from Russia in 1796, firmly refused to associate himself with any of Napoleon's schemes. *"Do not think"*, he said, *"that Bonapar-*

3) J. L. PACHOŃSKI, *Legiony polskie. Prawda i legenda*, Warszawa 1969, vol. I. p. 213.

4) M. OGINSKI, *Memuary*, St. Petersburg 1916, II, pp. 229-230.

5) W. ZAJEWSKI, *Wybicki znany i nieznan*, in: *Z epoki Legionów i Mazurka Dąbrowskiego*, (ed.) by W. Śladkowski, Lublin 2000, pp. 167-179.

6) Jan Henryk Dąbrowski (1755-1818) was born and grew up in Electorate of Saxony, where his father served as a Colonel. He joined the Saxon army in 1770 and returned to Poland in 1791, when the Polish Four-Year Sejm recalled all Poles serving abroad to the Polish army. As a cavalryman educated in a Dresden military school he was asked to reform the Polish cavalry. Under Poniatowski, he took part in the campaign of 1792 against the Russians. He was in Poland in 1794 when the Kościuszko Insurrection erupted. He took an active part in the uprising, defending Warsaw and leading an army corps in support of a rising in Greater Poland. Thanks to his courage and military skills the Supreme Commander of the National Armed Forces promoted him to the rank of general. After the collapse of the uprising, he was offered commissions in the Russian and Prussian armies, but chose to fight for Poland. Dąbrowski is more famous as the organiser of Polish Legions in Italy during the Napoleonic Wars, after which he became a Polish hero. See G. ZYCH, *J. H. Dąbrowski*, Warszawa 1964; J. PACHOŃSKI, *General Jan Henryk Dąbrowski*, Warszawa 1972.

7) T. RAWSKI, *Legiony Dąbrowskiego-pierwsze wojsko polskie na obczyźnie*, in: *Z epoki Legionów i Mazurka Dąbrowskiego*, (ed.) by W. Śladkowski, Lublin 2000, pp. 9-45.

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te will restore Poland. He thinks only of himself. He hates every great nationality, and still more the spirit of independence. He is a tyrant whose only aim is to satisfy his own ambitions. I am sure that he will create nothing durable.”⁸ With the assistance of his secretary, Józef Pawlikowski (1767–1829), Kościuszko composed the famous pamphlet entitled “*Can the Poles win their Independence?*” In it, he argued that the captive nation could not count on the support of France or of any other foreign power, but must rely exclusively on its own strength and resources.⁹ Kościuszko’s comments proved to be all too true. The Legions were never used for purposes related to Polish independence.

The First Legion was decimated by Suvorov at the battle of Trebbia in 1799; the second at Marengo in 1800; and the Legion du Rhin soon afterwards at Hohenlinden. The reserves were posted to pacification duties in occupied Italy, and in 1802–1803 were drafted with the expedition sent to crush the rebellion of Negro slaves on Santo Domingo. Men who had volunteered for service in the Legions in the hope of liberating Poland found themselves fighting in the Caribbean as the instruments of colonial repression. They died in their thousands from swamp fever before a handful of survivors surrendered to the British. Of the 6,000 men who took part in this expedition, only 600 survived.¹⁰ Disillusionment was general.

In 1801 at Lunéville, Napoleon made peace with his enemies and all agitation on the Polish Question was abruptly terminated. Moreover, Napoleon promised Russia and Austria that he would not sponsor the Émigré’s and would not help them in their efforts, which were directed against the existing order in their territories. This disposition was aimed first of all against the royalists but also had the Poles in mind. Many felt let down by Bonaparte and betrayed by France, but this was not to be the end of the Polish Napoleonic dream. Napoleon Bonaparte, wiping out regardless the frontiers of Europe, could not fail to capture the imagination of these men, tens of thousands of whom would answer his call again and follow him despite his repeated callous betrayal of their cause.¹¹

8) B. SZYNDLER, *Kościuszko a Napoleon I*, in: *Z epoki Legionów i Mazurka Dąbrowskiego*, (ed.) by W. Śladkowski, Lublin 2000, pp. 107–137.

9) *Ibid.*, p. 112.

10) See J. PACHONSKI, R. K. WILSON, *Poland’s Caribbean Tragedy: A Study of Polish Legions in the Haitian War of Independence 1802–1803*, Columbia, 1986, pp. 46–53.

11) E. I. FEDOSOVA, *The Polish Question in the External Policy of the First Empire in France*, Moscow, 1980, p. 76.

In the meantime, those Poles who abandoned all thoughts of a Napoleonic rescue turned their visions to the Russia. In St. Petersburg right at that time, foreign policy fell into the control of a Polish nobleman, Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski, who was laying plans of his own for the restoration of a united Poland under the aegis of the new Tsar, Alexander I.

Alexander I and Adam Czartoryski and their Polish policy

Alexander I (1801–1825), in time of his accession for the throne in 1801, announced that he would follow in the footsteps of Catherine the Great. His Polish policy, however, proved to be in the opposite direction to that of his illustrious grandmother. It could not be otherwise, for the teaching of the Swiss liberal, Frederick La Harpe, and the friendship of one of the greatest Polish patriot of his generation, Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski, had a profound effect on the character and policies of the young, impressionable monarch.

Under the 1794 Kościuszko’s Uprising, Prince Adam Czartoryski (1770–1861), together with his younger brother Constantine, became political hostages and resided at Catherine’s court in St. Petersburg, thus assuring the good behaviour of their father Adam Kazimierz.¹² In return the Empress allowed the Czartoryski’s family to retain its huge ancestral estates. Prince Adam, who was appointed *aide-de-camp* (personal assistant) to the Grand Duke Alexander, soon became the latter’s most intimate friend and confidant.¹³ However, his friendship with Alexander and, even more, with the Grand Duchess Elizabeth, aroused the suspicion of Emperor Paul (1796–1801), who exiled Czartoryski (1799) to Italy by appointing him Russian minister to the dethroned King of Sardinia.¹⁴ There he remained until the

12) Prince Adam Casimir Czartoryski (1731–1823) cousin of the Polish king Stanislaw Poniatowski, was governor-general of Podolia and proprietor of estates cultivated by more than 40,000 peasants. He builded the famous palace at Puławy.

13) Young Alexander spent hours in the company of a small group of friends - Paul Stroganov, Nikolay Novosiltsev, and Adam Czartoryski - dreaming of the day when he would be able to put into practice the ideas with which his tutor La Harpe had inculcated him, i.e. to transform Russia into a constitutional monarchy. See N.K. SCHILDER, *Imperator Alexandr Pervyj*, St. Petersburg, 1898, vol. III, pp. 477–483.

14) M. BOBRZYNSKI, *Dzieje Polski w zarysie*, Warsaw 1931, III, p. 31; V. N. GOLOVINA, *Zapiski grafini Varvary Nikolaevny Golovinoi*, St. Petersburg 1900, pp. 72–73 and 76.

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murder of Paul and the accession of Alexander, who was not entirely innocent of the death of his father. In a short urgent letter written within a week of his coming to power, the new Emperor summoned Czartoryski to return immediately to St. Petersburg.¹⁵

The accession of Alexander and the return of Czartoryski had little immediate effect on the position of the Poles. Many of them now looked hopefully towards Russia, instead of to France which had practically forsaken their cause, only to experience new disappointments. In a treaty (in October, 1801) between France and Russia, for example, one of the articles stipulated that neither country would protect or support any political refugees.¹⁶ Czartoryski regarded this as the only significant article in the treaty and believed it was directed against his countrymen. When he complained to Alexander, the latter explained that the article had no real significance, that it was purely a matter of form, and that the destinies of Poland were dear to him as ever.¹⁷ In the first years of his reign Alexander talked of Poland at “*more and more prolonged intervals*,” returning this subject only to console Czartoryski whenever he found the latter discouraged. Czartoryski, however, recognised the complexity of the Polish problem: “*In his position what could he do? What could I reasonably demand?*” he asked rhetorically.¹⁸

He could not demand the restoration of Poland, for this did not depend on Alexander alone. But the amelioration of the lot of the Poles was within the new Tsar’s power, and it was to the accomplishment of this end that, under Czartoryski’s guidance, he directed his efforts. He liberated the Poles in Siberia and permitted those who were abroad to return without difficulty to their homeland. Wherever possible, he restored their confiscated properties. He appointed Poles to high administrative posts in the Polish provinces, previously occupied by Russians. He even intervened in behalf of Poles who were held prisoners by the other partitioning powers.¹⁹ If Alexan-

der could not restore the kingdom of Poland, he was instrumental in preserving and perpetuating the language and culture of the Poles.

Poles were appointed as heads of the Universities of Kharkov and Wilno and the Krzemieniec Lyceum, which became the centers of Polish learning and literature. Czartoryski was placed in charge of education in the former Polish territories, so-called eight ‘Western Gubernias’ of the Empire from 1803 to 1823.²⁰ Moreover, Czartoryski, already serving as assistant Foreign Minister since 1802, was appointed head of the Foreign Office early in 1804, following the retirement of Count Vorontsov. He occupied this post until June, 1806. Many leading Russians, suspicious of a Pole as Foreign Minister, were disapproved of his appointment, and Czartoryski had found many obstacles at the St. Petersburg’s court for providing his policy.²¹

In the political system which Czartoryski endeavored to develop, he wanted Alexander to become the “arbiter of peace for the civilized world,” the “*protector of the weak and oppressed*,” and the “*guardian of justice among nations*.”²² Alexander’s reign should begin a new era in which the politics of Europe would henceforth be based upon the general good and the rights of the individual. Czartoryski never abandoned these ideas, but tried to give them practical application, and to have them accepted by the Tsar and his political leaders.

Although his system, by its fundamental principle of “*correcting all injustices*,” naturally led to the re-establishment of Poland, Czartoryski had to avoid even the use of the name. Instead, he cleverly spoke only of the “*progressive emancipation of peoples unjustly deprived of their political existence*.” He mentioned the Greeks and the Slavs by name. The time was not yet ripe to speak of the Poles.²³

Czartoryskis Mordplan wider Preussen in 1805

Not until 1805 were conditions at all favourable for more or less open consideration of the Polish Question. This was at the time when negotiations lead up to

15) Alexander to Czartoryski, 9. 3. 1801, in: *Mémoires du Prince Adam Czartoryski et correspondance avec l'empereur Alexandre Ier*, by Ch. de MAZADE (ed.) Paris 1887, I, pp. 1-2.

16) M. KUKIEL, *Czartoryski and European unity 1770-1861*, Princeton 1955, pp. 41-60.

17) *Mémories de Czartoryski*, I, p.286.

18) *Ibid.*, 279-80.

19) Czartoryski persuaded Austrian government to free the most radical of the Polish revolutionaries, for example Hugo Kołłątaj, who then settled in Russian Poland. See KUKIEL, p. 107.

20) BOBRZYNSKI, III, p. 31; S. MENDELSON, *Die Polenfrage im Zeitalter Napoleons und Alexander I.*, Berlin 1929, p. 31.

21) SCHILDER, II, p. 122.

22) *Ibid.*, p. 125.

23) KUKIEL, pp. 55-61.

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way for the Third Coalition. While England, Austria, and Russia were able to agree on joint military action against Napoleon, Prussia persisted in her neutrality. Without Prussia, the coalition would be much less powerful, for not only would Prussian troops be absent from among the allied armies, but Russian troops would be barred from passage through Prussian soil. Every effort was made, including the writing of personal letters by Alexander to Frederick William III and the offer of a 3 million pound-sterling British subsidy, to persuade the Prussian king of the folly of his neutrality, but the latter remained adamant.²⁴

Czartoryski, who as Foreign Minister conducted the Russian negotiations, regarded Prussian obstinacy with a certain degree of satisfaction. He actually had in mind to start the invasion of Prussia and to proclaim the Kingdom of Poland under the scepter of Alexander.

Czartoryski's plan, referred to by German historians as *Czartoryskis Mordplan wider Preussen*, had the approval of Russia's allies. Austria, for example, in the event of her losing Galicia, was to be compensated with Silesia and Bavaria.²⁵ England, likewise, gave her consent to the restoration of Poland and even agreed to pay Russia the subsidy originally intended for Prussia.²⁶

With the diplomacy of the Third Coalition practically completed, Alexander set out for Puławy, the palatial residences of Czartoryski's parents, where final steps were to be taken for the invasion of Prussia and the regeneration of Poland. During his stay at Puławy the Tsar received and conferred with various Polish notables. Of the outstanding Polish leaders, only Joseph Poniatowski, nephew of the last king of Poland, did not appear.²⁷ This was

24) SCHILDER, II, p. 127.

25) See SCHILDER, II, pp. 129-30., KUKIEL. p. 61-67.

26) Ibid., p. 64.

27) Jozef Anton Poniatowski (1763-1813), Polish Prince and Marshal of the French Empire (1813), was born in Vienna. The son of a high-ranking officer in the Austrian army and a nephew of the last King of Poland, Poniatowski himself fought with the Austrians against the Turks intermittently from 1778 to 1788. From 1792 to 1794 he was in the Polish army fighting the Russians in the Ukraine but was later allowed to settle on the family estates near Warsaw. Briefly in 1806 he accepted office as Governor of Warsaw under the King of Prussia but he welcomed Napoleon's invitation to command the first Polish Legion of the Grande Armée in 1807 and became Minister of War in the Grand Duchy. He liberated Cracow from the Austrians in July 1809 and founded new military institutions around Warsaw. Napoleon gave him V Corps in the Grande Armée of 1812. See R. BIELICKI, *Książę Józef Poniatowski*, Warszawa 1974, pp. 25-31.

because he was detained by the Prussians in Warsaw. At Puławy, Alexander held final conferences with Austrian envoys who, to the very end, hoped to dissuade him from carrying out his plans against Prussia. But Alexander informed them that he could no longer drawback: "*We shall raise Poland against the Prussians, and, if I can give you Silesia, you may count on me.*"²⁸ Writing at this time to the Russian ambassador in Vienna, Czartoryski revealed that "*His Majesty is firmly determined to begin the war against Prussia.*" He anticipated that the Russians would be received "*with open arms,*" because of the Polish hatred for Prussian domination.²⁹ Preparations were, in fact, made for banquets and balls to take place following Alexander's arrival in Warsaw and his proclamation as king of Poland. In the Old Town square the market women talked openly of coming events. "*Your administration will not last long,*" they are quoted as having said to the Prussian police officers: "*the Russians will come and we shall drive you out.*"³⁰

Suddenly and entirely unexpectedly Alexander announced that he would not go to Warsaw but to Berlin. Complete disillusionment dominated the Poles: there would be no invasion of Prussia; there would be no restoration of the kingdom of Poland. Instead of waging war on Prussia, Alexander soon vowed eternal friendship for Frederick William III at the tomb of Frederick the Great. What had happened?

Earlier Prince Peter Dolgoruki had been sent on secret assignment to Berlin and he had quickly fulfilled his mission. While on his way to Puławy, Alexander had dispatched his aide-de-camp, Prince Dolgoruki, to the Prussian monarch in a final attempt to persuade the latter to abandon the policy of neutrality. The envoy's task at that very moment was greatly facilitated by Napoleon's violation of Prussian neutrality in Ansbach. Frederick William became indignant and irritated. He at once gave Russian troops permission to pass through his territories, invited Alexander to Berlin, and concluded (3 November, 1805) with Russia and Austria the treaty of alliance at Potsdam.³¹

Thus the *Czartoryskis Mordplan wider Preussen* was abandoned and hopes of Prince Czartoryski to rebuild Poland were vain. It should be pointed out, for example, that Prince Dolgoruki was a convinced enemy of Czartoryski

28) SCHILDER, II, p. 135.

29) Ibid., p. 143.

30) A. A. KORNILOV, *Russkaja politika v Pol'she so vremen razdelov do nachala XX veka*, St. Petersburg 1915, p.17.

31) Grand Duke Nicholas Michailovich, *Imperator Aleksandr I*, St. Petersburg 1912, I, p. 17.

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and his whole political system, and was only too glad to undertake the secret mission to Berlin which he hoped would prove fatal to Czartoryski's plans.³² In Berlin, he joined Maxim Maximovich Alopeus, the Russian ambassador, who had apparently been disregarding Czartoryski's instructions regularly and who kept Berlin informed of Russia's designs against Prussia.³³ Although willing to support Russia, in return for adequate compensation, Austria preferred to have Prussia in the allied camp rather than in that of Napoleon, and, therefore, urged the Tsar to avoid war "at all cost" with Frederick William. Alexander also realized that to strike a sufficiently strong blow against Napoleon, he needed to attach Prussia to the coalition rather than to make war upon her. In this instance, his Polish sentiments had less weight than his determination to stop the growing strength of Napoleon.³⁴

Despite the disillusionment of the majority of the Poles, the sentiments of many of the Russophiles remained unchanged. Czartoryski never lost faith in the sincerity of Alexander's Polish sympathies, and even after he left the Foreign Office he continued to advise him on Polish affairs. Towards the end of 1806, when the war of the Fourth Coalition was in full swing, the Prince believed there was still time, in fact, a real need, for the regeneration of Poland. Accordingly, he addressed to the Tsar a "*Memoir on the necessity of re-establishing Poland to forestall Bonaparte.*"³⁵ In it he pointed out the importance of Poland in the struggle which would determine the fate of Russia and of Europe. He warned that Napoleon would use the resources of Poland against Russia.

Napoleon's victories over Fourth coalition and Treaty of Tilsit (1807)

In the years 1806–1807, Polish affairs were completely subordinated to the rivalry between Napoleon and the Russia (if you like Coalition). Any Polish state that was to be created would, of necessity, be an expression more of the

32) Author Schidler in his monograph relates that 'on one occasion at the Tsar's table Prince Dolgoruki became engaged in a heated argument with Prince Czartoryski and said to him: "You reason as a polish prince and I reason as a Russian Prince." Czartoryski became pale and remained silent.' SCHILDER, II, pp. 123–124.

33) S. ASKENAZY, p. 256.

34) KORNILOV, p. 17.

35) *Mémoires de Czartoryski*, II, pp. 148–58.

Balance of Power than of the wishes of the people. In 1805, the balance tipped decisively in Napoleon's favour. The French occupied Vienna. The Russian army tramped across the Polish lands from end to end, only to be thoroughly beaten with their Austrian allies at Austerlitz on 5 December. On 14 October 1806, at Jena and Auerstadt, the Prussians were annihilated. Berlin was occupied. In November, Marshal Davout took Poznań, whilst Marshal Murat entered Warsaw. The three partitioning powers were prostrate.

Fallen Prussia lay at Napoleon's feet. He achieved such military successes, the likes of which not one of his predecessors on the French throne could have dreamed about. However, the destruction of Russia did not bring about the end of the war. Russia continued to wage war and Napoleon realized that this new war would be more difficult and bloody. In this situation, the use of Polish lands and Polish population became the military and political aim of the moment, and one of the ways to accomplish military victory over a threatening opponent.

In that case, Dąbrowski and Wybicki, the old campaigners, were persuaded to issue an "Appeal to the Polish Nation". Zająček set to forming yet another Northern Legion, Prince Józef Poniatowski, after much deliberation, was persuaded to accept command of the new Polish forces. Napoleon's first visit to Warsaw on 19 December 1806 led to the formation of a Ruling Commission, headed by Stanisław Małachowski, former President of the "Great Sejm". The first act before a decisive showdown with the Russian army was to proclaim the coming military campaign of 1807 as the "Polish War," the name itself had a double meaning, but very promising for the Poles, calculated to fire up their patriotic feelings. While warming up the patriotic hopes of the Poles, Napoleon was speaking out about the fate of Poland itself in a meaningful but very careful way, mysteriously limiting himself to vague and conditional promises when he had to respond to enthusiastic calls from the Poles.³⁶

In the bulletin of the *Grande Armée* dated December 1, 1806, he wrote: "*Will a great people recover its existence and independence? Will it come back to life? Only God can resolve this great political problem.*"³⁷ It is likely that at that time he did not have any well-defined plans towards a future Poland. Especially since at that very time Napoleon was beginning to think about peace and possibly an alliance with Russia.

36) ASKENAZY, II, pp. 146–153.

37) FEDOSOVA, pp. 93–97.

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The advance of French armies into Polish lands towards the end of 1806 forced Bonaparte to return more often to the Polish Question. But even now the re-establishment of Poland as a nation did not enter into his plans. *“Poland - that is a difficult question - declared Napoleon at the end of 1806. The Polish nobility plays too great a role there, they allowed the partitions to take place, they ceased to be a people, they lack a public spirit. It is a corpse into which we have to breath life first, before I can even think about what to do with it...I will bring forth from it soldiers, officers and then I'll see.”*³⁸

The indecisive battle of Eylau (in February) and the Victory over the Russians at Friedland (in June) brought Napoleon to the Niemen, where he opened peace negotiations with Russia that resulted in the Treaty of Tilsit.

In a conversation with Tsar Alexander's representative, Prince Lobanov-Rostovsky, on the eve of the Tilsit negotiations, Napoleon declared that the mutual interests of Russia and France dictated the necessity of an alliance between these two powers and underscored that the Vistula river must become a genuine and natural frontier of Russia.³⁹ For Napoleon, the Polish Question was but an element in a diplomatic policy whose aim was to force Russia to join France against Britain, Austria and Russia. In this way, Napoleon already outlined in this conversation his program of a peace treaty and alliance with Russia, an idea that he contemplated for sometime which was based on a partition of continental Europe between France and Russia. There was no room left for other independent powers in Europe. And there was no room left for the Polish problem either. The territory of Poland was automatically divided along the Vistula between the two allies. It was a very simple program, quite advantageous to Napoleon, as he was to become the master of all Western and Central Europe. One of the most important elements of this program was to weaken Prussia, and to turn it into a country that had no serious role to play on the political arena.⁴⁰

The Russian emperor could not accept such a division of Europe. His aim was to preserve as much as possible the balance of power in Europe that existed before the war, and to preserve the old system of alliances, and for that it was important to keep Prussia as a more or less strong independent nation. With regard to the fate of the Polish lands, as we see it, neither

the French side nor the Russian had any concrete plan. In any case, there is no single document extant to outline either on the French or the Russian diplomatic side the possible resolution of the Polish question, on the eve of the Tilsit negotiations. It was an open field for bargaining.⁴¹

Curiously enough, it appears that each Emperor desired the other to take over the Prussian Polish provinces. *“Napoleon asked me to take the Polish crown,”* Alexander is quoted as having said, *“but conditions prevented me from doing so.”* Instead Alexander suggested that a Polish state be created with Prince Jerome at its head. He hoped thereby to preserve for Frederick William the left bank of the Elbe, where Napoleon already contemplated erecting the kingdom of Westphalia for his youngest brother.⁴² This proposal was rejected by Napoleon for, with Jerome on the Polish throne, he feared friction would develop whenever the slightest problem arose between the Polish state and Russia.⁴³

It was finally decided to establish a new state, to be called the Duchy of Warsaw under the scepter of the King of Saxony, whose dynasty had ruled Poland in the 18th century. The new state was called a Duchy rather than a Kingdom out of deference to Austria and Russia. When the Poles protested against the choice of name, Napoleon replied like that: *“Gentlemen, I have done more for you that you have a right to expect of me. It is out of deference to the neighbouring powers that I want you to take this name. It was the desire of the Tsar of Russia and I should not wish to fall out, over one word, with a sovereign whose friendship I seek.”*⁴⁴

Alexander, anxious not to leave the peace negotiations empty-handed and to establish a “natural frontier” between his own empire and the new Polish state, demanded and received the district of Białystok, the northeasternmost portion of the Prussian Polish provinces.⁴⁵

The creation of the Duchy of Warsaw undoubtedly gave some advantages to Napoleon. He received the means to exert pressure on Russia, Austria and Prussia and to keep them within the confines of the Tilsit treaty. The creation of this Duchy appeared to the Poles to signal the beginning of the rebirth

38) PACHONSKI, p. 246.

39) Ibid., 247, or See *Foreign policy of Russia XIX-XX century*. Documents of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ser. 1, T. 3, Moscow, 1962, p. 57.

40) A. PALMER, *Alexander I*, New York 1974, pp. 156-157.

41) See S. T. ROSS, *The European Diplomatic History 1789-1815*, Malabar, 1981, pp. 248-264.

42) ASKENAZY, II, p. 213.

43) Ibid., p. 214.

44) *Sbornik Imperatorskogo russkogo istoricheskogo obshchestva* (SIRIO), St. Petersburg, 1867-1916, LXXXIX, p. 74.

45) ASKENAZY, p. 216.

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of the Polish nation, which tied them further to the French Emperor and made them into a weapon in his hands. The king of Saxony receiving now the title of “Grand Duke of Warsaw” was an ally and a vassal of Napoleon.

Thus France acquired a vassal territory which could become the advance post for a new military campaign. The creation of the grand Duchy of Warsaw did not resolve the Polish problem - it was a temporary, shaky structure, of the same sort that had arisen several times during that tumultuous epoch. Besides, the Tilsit peace treaty itself was not very stable a structure and encompassed within itself almost all the elements of a future war.

The negotiations over Galicia and Russian “Treaty of Guarantee”

Two years after Tilsit, war broke out again between France and Austria, and again Poland and Russia were involved: Poland, because of the insurrection in Galicia, and Russia, because of her alliance with France and her interest in the Polish problem.

The war of 1809 brought about certain changes in the approach of Napoleon’s government towards the Polish problem. During the course of the Franco-Austrian war, there arose a real crisis in the relations between France and Russia, and therefore in the whole system of international politics created by the Tilsit treaty and as a result the enlargement of the territory of the Duchy of Warsaw at the expense of Western Galicia which had been apportioned to Austria during the third partition of Poland (1795). On the eve of the Schoenbrunn peace treaty, the French Foreign Minister, Champagny, wrote to Napoleon: “Poland will begin its rebirth, all the course of the Vistula river will belong to the Duchy of Warsaw, both Polish capitals will be Polish again. Time will bring about the rest.”⁴⁶ Champagny sketched this way, of course still in vague terms, a plan to create Poland a vassal state (no longer a small duchy) as a weapon of war in the event of a military conflict with Russia.

Despite the terms of the alliance, Russia took no active part in the war.⁴⁷ The Russian commander-in-chief refused to come to the relief of Sandomierz, besieged by Austria, although he and Poniatowski had agreed to act

“simultaneously and with the best of harmony.” The French resident in Warsaw complained of the very problematic conduct of the Russians during the war.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, when the campaign was over, Russia insisted on a voice in the peace arrangements, especially those touching the final disposition of Galicia. Whereas Napoleon would attach Galicia to the Duchy of Warsaw, Alexander would have Galicia either remain with Austria or become a part of the Russian Empire.

The negotiations over Galicia were long and controversial. In every increase in the size of the Duchy of Warsaw, Russia saw a threat to her own empire. The Russian Foreign Minister, Count Nicholas Rumiantsev (1807–1814), made this clear to the French ambassador, Caulaincourt: “I support our alliance, but I believe it my duty to say to the Tsar that we should renounce our foreign policy and sacrifice the last man rather than suffer the enlargement of this Polish domain, because this is an attack on our own existence.”⁴⁹ To the Russians, every increase in the size of the Duchy meant a step in the direction of the revival of Poland and the possible loss by Russia of her Polish provinces. When Napoleon tried to reach a compromise by offering territorial compensation to Russia, Alexander replied that “on the Polish Question there can be no compromise. The world is not large enough that we might be able to settle the affairs of Poland if it is a question of her restoration in any manner whatsoever.”

Despite the protests of the Russians and their fear that the enlargement of the Duchy of Warsaw would soon lead to the rebirth of Poland, Napoleon insisted that the only possible disposition of Galicia was its cession to the Duchy. “The honour of France would be compromised if those Galicians who had served her were abandoned to the revenge of Austria. Further, justice would not permit the cession of Galicia to a Russia which had contributed nothing to its conquest.”⁵⁰ Only after Napoleon suggested that Russia might receive Lvov, with something more, if Alexander finally would accept the principle of ceding Galicia to the Duchy of Warsaw.⁵¹ Actually, due to the solicitations of Austria, Lvov, in the Treaty of Vienna (14 October, 1809), remained

46) ASKENAZY, p. 235.

47) Alexander informed Austria in advance that he would delay the entry of his troops into Galicia and that they would be instructed to avoid all collisions with the Austrian army. See SCHILDER, p. 356.

48) J. STANLEY, *The French Residents in the Duchy of Warsaw, 1807-1813*, in: Canadian Slavonic Papers, 1985, XXVII, 1, pp. 49–64.

49) PALMER, p. 247.

50) Ibid., p. 248.

51) SIRIO, XXI, p. 326.

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in Austrian hands, but Russia was adequately compensated with the transfer to her of the district of Tarnopol containing some 400,000 inhabitants.⁵²

Napoleon had secured the Tsar's consent to the extension of the Duchy of Warsaw not only by territorial compensation but also by a promise to guarantee to Russia the possession of her Polish provinces. Accordingly, immediately after the conclusion of the Treaty of Vienna, the Russian Foreign minister drafted a so-called "Treaty of Guarantee." Count Rumiantsev declared that this treaty would reassure the Russian Empire 'once and for all' against the loss of its Polish territories through the re-establishment of the kingdom of Poland.⁵³ French ambassador in St. Petersburg Caulaincourt gave his approval to the treaty, having earlier received instructions from Napoleon not to refuse any Russian proposal whose purpose was to eliminate the concept of the restoration of Poland; he had been informed that Russia must be tranquilized at all costs.⁵⁴

When the "Treaty of Guarantee" reached Paris, it created considerable turmoil. A period of intense diplomatic negotiations followed; three distinct treaties were drafted but none was ever ratified. Although there was disagreement on practically all of the articles, Napoleon protested most violently against the first. This article stated simply that "*the kingdom of Poland will never be re-established*". "*I will never agree to that which Count Rumiantsov demands,*" protested Napoleon. He refused also to agree that the names Poland and Polish would never be used; such an engagement would be "ridiculous and absurd." Not wishing to antagonize the Poles, Napoleon wanted the treaty to remain secret. The Tsar would not agree, for that would remove the *raison d'être* (reason for existence) of the treaty. In Alexander's opinion, the purpose of treaty was to put an end to all the "fanciful hopes" of the Poles and this is could not do if they were unaware of its existence.⁵⁵

As the negotiations bore no fruit, they served to arouse the suspicions of Alexander and to strain the relations between France and Russia. The Tsar could not understand why, if Napoleon had no thought of restoring Poland, he made one think so by permitting the use of the words "Polish Army" and "Poland" and thereby exciting the Poles and "disturbing the peace of

Europe."⁵⁶ Napoleon, in turn, became angry with his eastern ally. "*Does Russia want war?*" he inquired. "*Why these continuous complaints? Why these injurious suspicions? Does Russia wish to prepare me for her defection? I shall be at war with her the day she makes peace with England.*"⁵⁷

French and Russians plans regarding Poland on the Eve of the Franco-Russian war of 1812

In 1810, it was becoming apparent that the Tilsit system had outlived its course and that a new European war may start precisely in Eastern Europe. The French government began, apparently right after the war of 1809, to work out the details of a new course of their international policy and received a completed sketch of it in the report from Champagny. On March 16, 1810 he presented to Napoleon "*a view of continental affairs and the rapprochement between Russia and Great Britain*".⁵⁸ The main idea of this report came down to this, that the alliance with Russia has entered its last phase - and that war was inevitable. In this sketch Champagny felt that Poland was one of the most faithful allies of France. Therefore in this report a proposition was brought forth that it is imperative to unite all the portions of Poland and make it possible to create on the Vistula "an opposing barrier" against Russia. At the same time Champagny felt that Poland itself should be used as a link in the traditional block for French foreign policy - Turkey, Sweden and Poland. This report sketched out in essence a program of diplomatic preparations for the war, in which the question regarding Poland was spelled out very broadly.⁵⁹

In this way French government attempted to bring the Duchy of Warsaw into the system of European alliances directed against Russia. On April 24, 1810, Napoleon approved Champagny's decision to send to Didelot, the French envoy in Copenhagen, a secret letter outlining the intention of the French emperor to create a secret alliance between Sweden, Denmark and the Duchy of Warsaw.⁶⁰ Champagny wrote to Didelot in this regard: "*Swe-*

52) PALMER, p. 234.

53) SCHILDER, II, p. 267.

54) Ibid., pp. 267-268.

55) E. I. FEDOSOVA, *The Polish Question in the External Policy of the First Empire in France*, Moscow, 1980, p. 146.

56) KUKIEL, pp. 93-98.

57) FEDOSOVA, pp. 165-167.

58) SHILDER N. K., *The Emperor Alexander I, His Life and Reign*, St. Petersburg, 1898, T. 3, 477-483.

59) Ibid., p. 482.

60) FEDOSOVA, p. 275.

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den already fears Russia. Does Denmark experience the same fear? Common interests must force Sweden, Denmark and the Duchy of Warsaw to unite in a secret alliance, which can absolutely and really be guaranteed by France."⁶¹ At the same time, he rushed to add "*all this is no more than plans.*"

Didelot did not make an official offer to the Danish government in this regard, but initiated it into the plans of the French emperor. However, the idea of the alliance was not pursued. Sweden and Denmark had no wish to get involved in "too big an adventure," they feared that they would be saddled with specific obligations towards the Duchy of Warsaw, whose position was still very precarious, dangerous and uncertain from the geographical point of view.⁶² It is true that in the fall of 1811, France again offered a tripartite alliance. But in 1811 Napoleon's offer was turned down again. Sweden preferred an alliance with Russia.

However, this lack of success did not change Napoleon's mind towards Poland. He did not want to and could not lose the advantages that the Polish territories and Polish recruits could bring him in his preparations for a war with Russia. Moreover, already by the end of 1811, Napoleon was thinking how to best put to use the patriotic feelings of the Poles. In a letter to his step-son dated December 30, 1811, he referred to for the first time in a demagogic way to the new aggression being prepared, as "the Polish War".⁶³ As a whole, the problem of Poland was never really spelled out by Napoleon. In the military treaty between France and Prussia (February 24, 1812) this problem was not mentioned, and in the alliance treaty with Austria (March 14, 1812) only very carefully.

In the meantime Russia also was preparing herself to the war with France and Poland in these plans played a very important role. As the breach between France and Russia became more and more probable, the Polish Question grew in importance. Within one week after announcing his withdrawal from the Continental System, Alexander wrote on 6 January, 1811, his well-known letter to Czartoryski in which he expressed the belief that the time had arrived to proclaim the re-establishment of Poland.⁶⁴

If in the period 1806 to 1810 Alexander appeared hostile to the Poles and to the idea of a kingdom of Poland, it was because he opposed an

independent Poland. He was interested in a Polish state only as part of the Russian Empire and in the "happiness" of The Poles only as Russian subjects. A Polish state outside of the Russian frontiers was a definite threat to the integrity of the Empire. Already many Poles in the Russian Polish provinces looked hopefully across the frontier. Thousands of them had joined the Polish Legions in 1807 and other thousands entered the service of the Duchy of Warsaw in the campaign of 1809.⁶⁵ In the event of a Franco-Russian war, Alexander feared he might have to contend not only with the Poles in the Ducal army, which was 60, 000 men, but also with the Poles in his own provinces, who might rise in revolt.⁶⁶

According to Alexander Poland, constituted as the Duchy of Warsaw, could lead only a precarious existence which depended only on the person of Napoleon. But Napoleon was not eternal; with his passing, the result could not but be disastrous for Poland. Therefore, her existence should be made more secure by tying her fortunes to those of Russia. Not only would Poland be re-established, but Europe would be delivered from the yoke of Napoleon.⁶⁷ Consequently, he instructed Czartoryski to go to Warsaw, to confer, with the necessary precautions, with the leaders of the nation and the army, to impart the Russian plans to them, to study their reactions, and to receive their engagements if they were favourably disposed. "*A moment like this,*" continued Alexander, "*presents itself but once; any other plan will only lead to a war to the death between Russia and France, in which the unfortunate theatre of operations will be your country.*"⁶⁸

Czartoryski, who earlier would have welcomed the creation of a Russian Poland with enthusiasm, now received Alexander's proposals with considerable reserve. He foresaw numerous difficulties. He doubted the sufficiency of military means that were to be used against Napoleon. He feared civil war in Poland, for it would not be easy to convince the Poles that Napoleon should be abandoned. They would have to be offered a state of affairs preferable to that which they enjoyed. This meant, according to Czartoryski, an offer of the Constitution of 3 May 1791, the reunion of all of the former Polish territories, and adequate outlets for trade. Even then, one could not be

61) Ibid., p. 278.

62) S. ASKENAZY, *Na rozdrożu*, Biblioteka Warszawska, 1911, p. 78-83.

63) FEDOSOVA, p. 250.

64) *Mémoires de Czartorzski*, II, pp. 248-254.

65) During the campaign of 1809 Alexander issued confiscation of property for the nobles and bourgeoisie who enrolled under the flag of Poiniatowski. See PALMER, p. 213.

66) BOBRZYNSKI, III, p. 53.

67) KUKIEL, p. 94.

68) Ibid., p. 96.

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entirely certain that the Poles would abandon Napoleon, as they were grateful to him for what he had already done; they regarded the French as close friends and comrades in arms, and the Russians as natural enemies; they would fear for the lives of the 20,000 Poles fighting in Spain and for their children in Paris; and finally, they still had faith in the genius of Napoleon to achieve victory under all circumstances.⁶⁹

Czartoryski, in accordance with Alexander's request,⁷⁰ went to Warsaw to sound out the leading Poles on their attitude toward Russia and toward the new plans for Poland. Among others, he talked with Poniatowski, at that time Minister of War and Commander-in-Chief of the Polish army. The Polish leader rejected the overtures, and even revealed Alexander's designs to Napoleon. Czartoryski had no more success with other influential Poles. In reporting to the Tsar on his mission to Warsaw, he stated that the re-establishment of Poland was a universal wish among the Poles, but that they were not convinced; especially those in the army, that this could be realized by abandoning France and attaching themselves to Russia. If Russia was to win sympathy among the Poles, continued Czartoryski, her conduct must be entirely different from that of the past. She must prove her goodwill not only to those Poles under her domination but also to those in the Duchy of Warsaw. Every occasion must be used to prove that Napoleon's real intentions were less generous and beneficent than those of the Tsar. In concluding his report, the Prince recommended two alternatives: if Alexander did not intend to open hostilities, he should use the time to court the Poles both in Russia and in the Duchy of Warsaw; if he took the offensive or was compelled

69) Czartoryski to Alexander, 30. 1. 1811, *Mémoires de Czartoryski*, II, pp. 255-270.

70) Alexander wrote another, much longer letter to Czartoryski. In it he promised that the proclamation of Poland's re-establishment should precede all other events. The new kingdom would include all of the former Polish territories, with her frontier at the line of the Dvina, the Beresina, and the Dnieper. An attempt would be made to persuade Austria to give up Galicia in exchange for Moldavia and Wallachia. Being unfamiliar with the 3 May Constitution, Alexander could not promise the Poles that particular charter, but he assured Czartoryski that it would be a liberal one. Commerce would be revived, misery abolished and taxes reduced. Again he cited numerous figures to prove that if the Poles supported him, his military forces would be more numerous than those of Napoleon and that he would be able to reach the Oder "without striking a blow." Thus the co-operation of the Poles was essential, and until Alexander was certain of their unanimous support he was determined not to open hostilities with France. *Mémoires de Czartoryski*, II, pp. 271-278.

to defend himself, then he should proceed at once to execute his plan by proclaiming the restoration of Poland under the most favourable conditions.⁷¹

During the year following Czartoryski's report on the situation in the Duchy of Warsaw, the correspondence between him and Alexander stopped. When it was resumed in the spring of 1812, the latter explained the reasons for his silence: his plans for Poland had acquired too much publicity, a definite disadvantage to them; he had received information that Czartoryski was being watched and did not wish to expose him to any danger; finally, he had decided to await events, since the Prince's letter had given him little hope for the success of his scheme.⁷²

Alexander inquired what would be the most appropriate time to announce the rebirth of Poland—should this be done at the very moment hostilities broke out or after the Russian armies had gained some marked advantages? He also sought Czartoryski's opinion concerning the creation of an autonomous Grand Duchy of Lithuania as a preliminary measure to the revival of Poland.⁷³

Not before the pause of more than two months did Czartoryski finally reply to Alexander's queries. The reply was most critical and discouraging. In it the Prince asserted that the creation of a Grand Duchy of Lithuania would have been desirable a year earlier, but that now, when "the cannons were about to roar," it would be difficult or almost impossible to change the present state of affairs. He pointed out that, with the appearance of Napoleon again on Polish soil, he expected "at every moment some remarkable development" which would probably take place even before his letter reached Alexander. Therefore, any "proclamations or operations" on the Tsar's part would appear to be too late.⁷⁴

Seemingly ignoring the advice of his former Minister, Alexander proceeded to Vilno, where he was entertained in grand style by the aristocracy and where he made a favourable impression on the inhabitants of the region. It was rumoured that in the baggage of the Tsar was the crown of the last king of Poland. Whether or not this was true, it is a fact that a proclama-

71) See KUKIEL, pp. 103-104, or Report dard Puławy, 12. 3. 1811, in: *Grand duke Nicholas*, I, pp. 373-79.

72) Czartoryski to Alexander, 1. 4. 1812, *Mémoires de Czartoryski*, II, 279-284.

73) *Ibid.*, p. 284.

74) Czartoryski to Alexander, 4. 6. 1812, and postscript of 13. 6. 1812. See *Grand Duke Nicholas*, I, pp. 387-392.

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tion, which was to be read by Alexander at the outbreak of hostilities, had been drafted. After showering the Poles with praise for their heroism and patriotism, the message concluded with the following words: “I declare in the name of heaven and earth that I restore the Kingdom of Poland, to include the Duchy of Warsaw and all of the Polish provinces and territories which, following the partitions of 1772, 1793, and 1796, were annexed to Russia; that in the name of God, I place upon my head the royal Polish crown, separated from the imperial Russian crown, but united in my person with Russia; that I regard as the fundamental law of the Polish people the Third of May constitution, which is beloved and respected by all of you; and I propose to govern you in accordance with it.”⁷⁵

Just when celebrations were at their height, during a ball given by the Tsar in General Benningsen’s palace, news reached Alexander that Napoleon had crossed the Niemen. Twenty-four hours later not a single nobleman’s carriage was to be found in Wilno. Two days afterwards, Napoleon appeared in the Lithuanian capital. When Alexander issued his stirring war proclamation to the Russian troops, he called upon them to defend their “religion, country, and independence.”⁷⁶ Not one word was said of the Poles, for he knew the Russians would die for their fatherland but not for Poland.

Poland and the War of 1812

The year 1812 made new difficulties and changes in the policy of belligerent Powers. The Russian Campaign was just another act of political domination on the Continent for the French. For the Russians, it presented the supreme test for the integrity and durability of their Empire. For the Poles alone, it was a war of liberation. When the Grande Armée crossed the Niemen on 24 June, most of its soldiers were aware only that they were crossing the frontier of the Russian Empire. But the thousands of Poles among them were more conscious that they were crossing the historic frontier of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. As they tramped towards Wilno, they knew that they were destroying the barrier which had kept the two parts of the old Republic apart for the last twenty years. On the Lithuanian side, ex-

pectations rose feverishly. A number of magnates, fearful of social disorder, continued to support Alexander.⁷⁷

The Poles in the Napoleonic Grande Armée numbered almost 100,000 men. Thirty-five thousand of them were concentrated in the Fifth Polish Corps under General Poniatowski. Poles also during the march into Russia played a very important role in the military operations. Polish lancers were the first to swim the Niemen and carry the tricolor onto Russian territory. Umiński’s dragoons were the first into Moscow. Poniatowski’s Fifth Corps played a crucial role at Borodino: the *Chevaux-Légers*⁷⁸ saved Napoleon’s life from a pack of marauding Cossacks; Poniatowski covered the whole retreat and defended the Berezina crossings. Polish units were the first in and the last out of Russia; 72,000 never returned, and many more died of wounds or typhus in the following months. Yet they did not abandon a single field-gun or standard to the enemy in the whole retreat.⁷⁹ As the remnants of the Grande Armée streamed westwards and Napoleon rushed to Paris, the Duchy of Warsaw was left defenceless. Dąbrowski’s division followed the French army into Germany, but Poniatowski fell back on Cracow with 16,000 men.

In the meantime, Czartoryski, now realizing with the retreat of Napoleon that the Tsar was the only hope of his countrymen, urged Alexander to revert to his original scheme for Poland instead of taking vengeance.⁸⁰ He even prepared and transmitted to the Tsar a draft of a constitution for his country. Further, he suggested that an independent Poland be created under the Tsar’s youngest brother, the Grand Duke Michael Pavlovich.⁸¹

In his reply, Alexander summarized his attitude toward the Polish Question and the difficulties with which he had to contend. He pointed out first of all that his success had in no way altered either his sentiments or his intentions toward Poland. “Her people need not fear vengeance, for this was

77) FEDOSOVA, pp. 255–264.

78) The Chevaux-légers (from French *cheval*-horse and *léger*-light) was French light cavalry, roughly similar to lancers in the armies of other states during the Napoleonic Wars. Perhaps the most famous of all such units were the *Polish 1st Light Cavalry Regiment* of the Guards and the *Polish 3rd Light Cavalry Regiment*. J. L. PACHOŃSKI, *Legiony polskie. Prawda i legenda*, Warszawa 1969, vol. II., pp. 201–205.

79) *Ibid.*, pp. 265–274.

80) Czartoryski to Alexander, 27. 12. 1812, in *Memoires de Czartoryski*, II, pp. 298–302.

81) KUKIEL, pp. 102–103.

75) SCHILDER, p. 256. or KUKIEL, pp. 178–189.

76) KUKIEL, pp. 110–115.

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a sentiment which was unknown to him and his greatest pleasure was to repay evil with good.” Already he had announced a general amnesty in order to prove to the Poles that they will never find anywhere greater happiness and security than in uniting with powerful and generous Russia, and he had given the strictest orders to the Russian generals to treat the Poles as friends and brothers.⁸² Alexander confessed that there were certain difficulties which he had to overcome despite the apparent “splendor of his position.” Public opinion in Russia was one of them. The conduct of the Polish army in Russia its sack of Smolensk, and of Moscow, and its devastation of the whole country had revived old hatreds. The other was the attitude of Austria and Prussia. An attempt to carry out his plans toward Poland “would throw Austria and Prussia completely into the arms of France.”⁸³

These were the two principal obstacles which were to stand in the way of the attainment of Alexander’s Polish plans, and which explain their but partial fulfillment at the Congress of Vienna. Because of Russian opinion, Alexander could not accept Czartoryski’s proposal for an independent Poland under the Grand Duke Michael. He wrote to Czartoryski: “Do not forget that Lithuania, Podolia, and Voihynia have till now regarded themselves as Russian provinces, and that no logic in the world will be able to persuade Russia to see them under the domination of any other sovereign than the one who rules Russia.”⁸⁴

As long as the war continued and the final provisions of the peace settlement were not determined, the wishes of the other great powers had to be considered. During the summer of 1812, Austria and Prussia supported Napoleon. Alexander won them over to the allied side only after long negotiations and by avoiding any reference to his Polish plans. The treaties with Austria and Prussia provided indirectly for the return of Polish territories to

them (so-called Kalisz and Reichenbach treaties).⁸⁵ Similarly, at the Congress of Vienna, Alexander finally had to be content with less than the whole of the Duchy of Warsaw if the recurrence of war, this time among the allies themselves, was to be averted.

Throughout the spring and summer of 1813 those who had remained on the Russian side tried to induce Poniatowski and his army to cast off their loyalty to Napoleon and place itself at Alexander’s disposal. Poniatowski, however, had the strictest sense of personal honour. He rejected the Russian proposals and led his army off to rejoin Napoleon in Germany. On 19 October, the last day of the Battle of the Nations at Leipzig, the heavily wounded prince died while trying to swim the river Elster when the French, whose retreat he was covering, blew up the bridges.

Nevertheless, the Poles continued to follow Napoleon. When Napoleon went into exile on the island of Elba, half of the symbolic guard he was allowed were Polish Chevaux Légers. Alexander, on the other hand, did succeed later in creating a small Kingdom of Poland in “personal union” with the Russian Empire (1815).⁸⁶ Enjoying a liberal constitution, their own flag, army and language, the majority of the Poles in the “Congress Kingdom,” as it came to be called, were grateful to the restorer of their fatherland. Only the perversion of Alexander’s principles in the government of Poland by Russian officials made the position of the Poles insecure, precarious and intolerable.

85) In the Treaty of Kalisz with Prussia (28. 2. 1813; see Martens, VII, 62-81) Alexander promised not to lay down his arms until Prussia was reconstituted proportionally as of 1806. Further, Alexander guaranteed to Prussia her present possessions, including East Prussia, to which was to be joined sufficient territory to serve as a tie between East Prussia and Silesia. Such a link could be established at the expense of the Duchy of Warsaw. See KUKIEL, p. 104; In the Treaty of Reichenbach (27. 6. 1813) it was agreed by Austria, Prussia, and Russia that Duchy of Warsaw was to be dissolved and partitioned among the three powers according to arrangements made by them without the intervention of France. KUKIEL, pp. 114-118.

86) See S. ASKENAZY, *Polska a Europa, 1813-1815*, Biblioteka Warszawska, 1909, pp. 1-30, 209-237. or C. K. WEBSTER, *The Congress of Vienna, 1814-1815*, London 1918.

82) Ibid., pp. 103-104

83) KUKIEL, p. 104.

84) Czartoryski to Alexander, I. 4. 1812, *Memoires de Czartoryski*, II, 279-284.