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Swedish Baron G.M. Sprengtporten in Russian Service, 1786–1809

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Abstract: General of the Infantry Count G.M. Sprengtporten (1740–1819) is one of the less known historical figures of the last quarter of the 18th and of the early 19th century. As a Swedish citizen, he hatched plans to turn Finland into an independent state. In the mid-1780s he saw in Catherine II a potential ally who could implement his ideas. After accepting the invitation to enter Russian service, Sprengtporten did not blend either in the Highest Court or in the Russian army. Not having shown any significant military feats during the wars of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, he distinguished himself in the diplomatic and lawmaking field. An important event was his mission to Europe (1800–1801), which resulted in the return of more than six thousand Russian prisoners to Russia. The draft “Regulations on the Establishment of the Main Administration in New Finland,” developed by Sprengtporten with some changes made by Emperor Aleksander I, became the cornerstone of Finnish autonomy within the Russian Empire over the next century. Occupying for a short time the post of Governor General, he became a link between Finland and Russia. The scientific novelty of the article lies in the comprehensive presentation of the Russian service of G.M. Sprengtporten. The article is written on the basis of published sources and unpublished documents from some central archives, which are introduced into scientific circulation for the first time.

Keywords: Sprengtporten Georg Magnus, Finland autonomy, Russian Empire, Paul I, Aleksander I, Russo-Finnish relations

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Русская служба шведского барона Г.М. Спренгтпортена, 1786–1809 гг.

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Аннотация: Граф, генерал от инфантерии Г.М. Спренгтпортен (1740–1819 гг.) является одним из наименее известных исторических деятелей последней четверти XVIII – начала XIX в. Будучи шведским подданным, он вынашивал планы по превращению Финляндии в независимое государство. В середине 1780-х гг. он увидел в лице Екатерины II потенциального союзника, который мог осуществить его идеи. Приняв приглашение поступить на русскую службу, Спренгтпортен



так и не стал «своим» как при Высочайшем Дворе, так и в русской армии. Не отметившись сколь бы значимыми военными подвигами во время войн конца XVIII – начала XIX в., он отличился на дипломатическом и законодательском поприще. Важным событием явилась его миссия в Европу (1800–1801 гг.), итогом которой стало возвращение в Россию более 6 тыс. русских пленных. Разработанный им проект «Положения об учреждении главного управления в Новой Финляндии» с некоторыми изменениями императора Александра I стал краеугольным камнем финляндской автономии в составе Российской империи на протяжении последующего столетия. Заняв на непродолжительное время пост генерал-губернатора, он был связующим звеном между Финляндией и Россией. Научная новизна статьи заключается в комплексном представлении русской службы Г.М. Спренгтпортена. Статья написана на основе опубликованных источников, а также документов из нескольких центральных архивов, которые впервые вводятся в научный оборот.

Ключевые слова: Спренгтпортен Георг Магнус, автономия Финляндии, Российская империя, Павел I, Александр I, русско-финские отношения

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Introduction

Russian-Swedish relations in the 17th – early 19th centuries contributed to the emergence of personalities that played a significant role in the history of the Russian north-west. They started their activities in the service of the Swedish Crown, but for various reasons they ended up serving the Russian state. Often motivated by a desire for revenge against Sweden, they actively promoted the idea of an armed clash of Sweden and Russia. In the early XVIII century one such person was Johann Reinhold von Patkul (ca. 1660–1707), who went into service under Peter the Great. At the end of the same century, George Magnus (Russ: Yegor Maksimovich) Sprengtporten¹ (1740 [1741] – 1819), a kindred spirit of von Patkul, began his service under Catherine II. The life and work of Sprengtporten are known only to a narrow circle of specialists. Some facts of his biography are still ambiguous and characterized in conflicting ways by Russian and Finnish historians, which is primarily the result of an inadequate source base.

This article focuses on the activities of Count G.M. Sprengtporten in the Russian state service between 1786 and 1809 – a service that included the military, diplomatic, law-making, and administrative fields. Sprengtporten's activities can be reconstructed on the basis of surviving archival documents and some published records. This article rests on historical sources from the State Archives of the Russian Federation (GARF), the Russian State Historical Archive (RGIA), and the Russian State Military Historical Archive (RGVIA). Documents from the Cabinet of the ruling monarch enable us to trace the monetary payments that Sprengtporten received throughout the entire period of his service in Russia. Of particular importance is a complex of documents, dating from 1800–1801, which sheds light on his diplomatic mission in Europe. It contains correspondence with Russian and foreign statesmen with whom the general interacted. No less important are materials related to the formation of columns of Russian prisoners and their return to their homeland. Bureaucratic correspondence between high-ranking statesmen of the Russian Em-

¹ We can find several spellings of the surname in Russian Documents of the late 18th – early 19th century: Sprengporten, Shprengtporten, Shprenport.

pire and representatives of the Russian administration in New Finland makes it possible to characterize Sprengtporten's activities in his capacity as Governor-General of Finland.

Despite our extensive archival research, the archival documents alone do not provide a comprehensive description of Sprengtporten's life and work in Russia. The published sources fill this gap to some extent. Among them, we pay special attention to the Kammerfurier ceremonial journals of the second half of the 1780–1810s, which make it possible to characterize the extent of Sprengtporten's participation in the court life and his closeness to the reigning monarch. Some information is contained in the "Papers of Empress Catherine II, kept in the State Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs" published in the "Collection of the Russian Historical Society," and the memoirs, for example, by A.V. Khrapovitsky, the State Secretary of Catherine II, and Count A.Kh. Benckendorff, the chief of gendarmes and the Head of the III Department of His Imperial Majesty's Own Chancellery. The use of a wide range of sources, we hope, enables us to provide an objective picture of the historical past.

Conflicting assessments of G.M. Sprengtporten appear in the historiography. In the pre-revolutionary period, K.F. Ordin produced a biographical sketch on the basis of a thorough study of the documents and knowledge of literature. Ordin's merit was the introduction of Sprengtporten's archival documents and manuscripts into circulation. In general, he presented Sprengtporten in an unflattering light as "a person easily carried away and cowardly despite his age"² whose chief characteristics were "cunning... and the ability to wear a mask once put on."³ According to Ordin, Sprengtporten's entire service to Russia amounted to hustle and bustle and "selfish activity."⁴ As Sprengtporten's third fatherland, Russia, Ordin opined, received "not service, but substantial harm" from Sprengtporten's activities.⁵

Another prerevolutionary commentator was Academician Ya.K. Grot, who wrote the essay "Sprengtporten, a Swedish emigrant under Catherine II," originally published in the "Journal of the Ministry of Public Education" (1885), and then a volume of Grot's essays (1885). This essay retells the works of Finnish authors in the Fennoman (Finnish nationalist) movement, whose discussion of Sprengtporten grew out of their exploration of Finnish history in the middle third of the 19th century.

The Polish historian and publicist K. Waliszewski repeatedly mentioned Sprengtporten in his 1912, work "Catherine the Great's son. Paul I." We will not analyze the scientific significance of this work, but the author's attitude to Sprengtporten during the reign of Emperor Paul I emerges clearly from the following statement:

Having powers that were not clearly expressed, he arbitrarily expanded their limits. In vague expressions, he made it emphatically clear that he was holding in his hands not only the fates of Russia and France, but also of all Europe.⁶

In Soviet historiography, Sprengtporten was mainly mentioned in the context of international relations and the annexation of Finland to the Russian Empire. In most works,

² Ordin, K.F. "Sprengtporten, geroy Finlyandii," *Russkiy arkhiv*. 4 (1887): 497.

³ *Ibid.*, 484.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 501.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 502.

⁶ Valishevskii, K. *Syn Velikoi Yekateriny*. Book 3 (Moscow: RIPOL klassik Publ., 2005), 36.

he is characterized as one of the leaders of the “anti-Swedish and Russophile movement in Finland.”⁷

Contemporary Russian historians offer differing emphases with respect to Sprengtporten's activities in the Russian service. On the grounds of several 1780s manuscripts, in which Sprengtporten developed the idea of alienating Finland from Sweden, V.V. Roginsky considers him a theorist of the grand project of redrawing the map of Northern Europe. Finland was indeed annexed to the Russian Empire as an “autonomous Grand Duchy”⁸ in the first stage of this project. During the transition period (1808–1809), Roginsky views Sprengtporten as a kind of connecting link between the Russian government and Finnish society.⁹ L.A. Peksheva, by contrast, identifies Sprengtporten as author of a project for administering New Finland,¹⁰ although formally this project was the collective endeavor of a special committee, which also included A.A. Arakcheev and B.F. Knorring.

Since the second third of the 19th century, Finnish historians have also discussed Sprengtporten's place and role in the history of Finland. Georg Forsman (aka Iryo Koskinen) was one of the first to turn him into a “true hero of the nation.”¹¹ His opponent was Karl Tigerstedt, in whose opinion Sprengtporten was driven by wounded pride, rather than by lofty motives. All his actions to alienate Finland from the Swedish Crown are regarded by Tigerstedt as revenge.

In works by Finnish authors, as in the slim Russian literature, Sprengtporten's service in Russia is considered in relation to specific historical events. The main emphasis in nearly all these works is placed on his personal qualities: was he a “hero” or a “traitor”? There is as yet no holistic understanding of the place and role of Count G.M. Sprengtporten in the service of the Russian monarchs in 1786–1809. We attempt to provide such an understanding in this article. On the basis of a wide range of historical sources, some of which are being introduced into scholarly circulation for the first time, we will bring together diverse aspects of Sprengtporten's career as a lawmaker, administrator, military official, and diplomat.

Sprengtporten and His Service under Catherine II (1786–1796)

By 1786, Sprengtporten had a wealth of military experience. As a graduate of the Stockholm Military Corps, he took part in the Seven Years' War. The command of the Savolax brigade in the 1770s enabled him to gain administrative experience, as he was responsible not only for the fighting capacity of the unit, but also for the daily life of his soldiers and officers and for relations with the local administration and the population. In Karelia, he faced a serious task: to strengthen the province in case of war with Russia. Already at that time, he demonstrated his persuasive ability. He “could

⁷ Kiaivariainen, I.I. *Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia na severe Evropy v nachale XIX veka i prisoedinenie Finliandii k Rossii v 1809 godu* (Petrozavodsk: Karel'skoe knizhnoe izdatelstvo Publ., 1965), 26.

⁸ Roginskii, V.V. “Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia na Severe Evropy v kontse napoleonovskikh voim, 1807–1815 gg.” (PhD diss., Institute of General History of the Russian Academy of Sciences, 2002), 37.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 339.

¹⁰ Peksheva, L.A. “Deiatel'nost' M.M. Speranskogo v sfere mestnogo upravleniia” (PhD diss., Voronezh State Pedagogical university, 2007), 68.

¹¹ See: Grot, I.K. “Sprengtporten, shvedskij immigrant pri Ekaterine II.” Vol. 4 of *Trudy* (St. Petersburg: Kushnerev & Ko Publ., 1901), 380.

convince the residents that he was concerned only about their benefits, and they obeyed him unquestioningly.”¹² He would constantly use this quality in the future.

G.M. Sprengtporten appears to have begun drafting various projects centered on his native Finland at the start of the 1780s. In 1785 he became close to the Russian ambassador to The Hague, Stepan Alekseevich Kolychev. In one of his letters, the Swedish baron outlined to the ambassador the plan he had developed to achieve independence for Finland with the help of Russia. At that time Sprengtporten's dissident activities played into the hands of St. Petersburg. Soon after, in 1786, he had to make a difficult choice

between the Swedish “enlightened absolutism” of Gustav III and the Russian “enlightened absolutism” of Catherine II.¹³

Sprengtporten's first decade of service to Catherine II (1786–1796) was not especially successful. After achieving the rank of colonel, he was named chamberlain of the Imperial Court in September 1786.¹⁴ Sprengtporten himself neglected to mention the fact that he had entered the Russian service at the rank of colonel on an 1818 form, instead listing his initial rank as Major General. He was promoted to the rank of general on October 21, 1786. Having entered the Russian service, Sprengtporten ceased to be a foreigner who could count on preferences at the Court. His place was now determined by the Table of Ranks and seniority in the promotion to the rank. It is this fact that largely explains why we extremely rarely see him among those invited to festive dinners, as evidenced by the Kammerfurier journal for 1787.¹⁵

It would seem that the outbreak of the Russian-Swedish war (1788–1790) would have brought Sprengtporten to the fore. However, as specialists have since noted, the practical advice of the “expert on Finland” was more hindrance than help. For the baron himself, the war had negative consequences. His participation in the war against Sweden earned him a death sentence from the District Court of Abo – a sentence approved by King Gustav III. Sprengtporten was also wounded, though how severely is unclear. In her rescript of April 8, 1790, to Prince G.A. Potemkin, Catherine II noted that the baron had been wounded so severely that “he... is not able to serve in the upcoming campaign.”¹⁶ That said, the injury did not prevent him from devoting attention to the fate of his son, who at that time already had the rank of captain of the Russian army and had been transferred to the Turkish theater of war.

Probably the failed Anjala Confederation headed by Sprengtporten prevented Catherine II from ending the war with the northern neighbor. The participation of the personal enemy of the Swedish king in the negotiations was unacceptable. To neutralize

¹² Grot, I.K. “Sprengtporten, shvedskij immigrant pri Ekaterine II.” Vol. 4 of *Trudy* (St. Petersburg: Kushnerev & Ko Publ., 1901), 383.

¹³ Lanko, D.A. *Modernizatsiia v okruzhenii: sluchai Finliandii. Chast' I: pervaiia polovina XIX v.* (St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo Evropeiskogo universiteta v Sankt-Peterburge Publ., 2019), 9.

¹⁴ *Kamer-fur'yerskii tseremonial'nyy zhurnal 1786 goda. Dopolneniia.* (St. Petersburg: [S.n.], 1886), 114.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ “Podpisannyi Yekaterinoy II reskript knyazyu Potemkinu o prinyatii na sluzhbu k nemu syna general-mayora barona Sprengtportena,” in vol. 42 of *Sbornik Imperatorskogo Russkogo Istoricheskogo Obshchestva* (St. Petersburg: [S.n.], 1885).

the baron, he was granted the Order of St. Anne of the 1st Class¹⁷ and leave for treatment at Berezhskiye Vody.¹⁸

Sprengtporten took offense at this evidence of the Empress's mistrust, and wrote two letters to Catherine. The first letter from Aachen is dated May 10, 1791 and is mentioned in "Memoranda" by A.V. Khrapovitsky. It dealt with the non-payment of the due salary through court banker Richard Sutherland. In the second letter, composed two months later, Sprengtporten asked to be dismissed from the army, but with a promotion to the next rank and payment of a pension. The Empress expressed her displeasure at his effrontery in a letter to Cabinet Secretary P.I. Turchaninov:

Peter Ivanovich. I am enclosing Sprengtporten's second letter of dismissal. First, I do not grant the rank of general-lieutenant to anyone upon resignation. Second, find out how much he receives per year from the treasury and the Cabinet funds. Third, what did he get from me? And then report back to me soon, tomorrow, or on Saturday.¹⁹

Sprengtporten's resignation was short and something of a formality. He continued to receive a salary over the next few years; including rations, orderlies and the headquarters, it amounted to almost 4,500 rubles. The fact that he was residing abroad forced the Cabinet to index the payment "with the increase of the ruble exchange rate."²⁰

On January 1, 1795, Baron Sprengtporten was promoted to lieutenant general.²¹ His service was not connected with the active army. Moreover, it turned out to be short. As Sprengtporten wrote,

feeling weak to perform active duty... I asked again for permission to go for the treatment.²²

While abroad, he continued to receive a pension. In addition, the Russian treasury paid the debts of the "retired" general. He himself mentioned that his debt to Dutch Baron Gope in the amount of 5 thousand francs had been paid.²³

The transfer to Russian service did not justify Sprengtporten's hopes. Participation in the Russian-Swedish war tied him permanently to Russia. Lacking extensive connections at the Court, he became one of the many foreigners in the Russian army. At the same time, even during many years of "treatment" on the waters, he continued his "service" and received a significant salary.

Sprengtporten and His Mission in Europe

From the first months of his stay in St. Petersburg, Sprengtporten maintained contacts with Grand Duke Pavel Petrovich, the future Paul I, and his wife, Grand Duchess Maria Feodorovna. Upon his ascent to the throne, Paul immediately began to institute his own ways of doing things in the army. The baron's return to Russia was marked with

¹⁷ Russian State Military Historical Archive (RGVIA), f. 489, op. 1, d. 7062, l. 104.

¹⁸ Pamyatnye zapiski A.V. Khrapovitskogo, stats-sekretaria Imperatritsy Yekateriny Vtoroi (Moscow: Universitetskaya Tipografiya Publ., 1862), 228.

¹⁹ "Sobstvennoruchnoye pis'mo Yekateriny II k Turchaninovu ob uvol'nenii iz russkoy sluzhby Sprengtportena (iyul' 1791 g.)" in vol. 42 of *Sbornik Imperatorskogo Russkogo Istoricheskogo Obshchestva*, 192.

²⁰ Russian State Historical Archive (RGIA), f. 468, op. 1, d. 3909, l. 31.

²¹ *Sbornik Imperatorskogo Russkogo Istoricheskogo Obshchestva*, 192.

²² RGVIA, f. 489, op. 1, d. 7062, l. 105.

²³ Ibid.

a promotion to the rank of full general on March 31, 1798. He noted with pleasure that he “had been issued all payments due to him since the day of his resignation.”²⁴ This no doubt made it possible to somewhat improve his financial situation. By September of that year, he was attending dinner parties within a narrow circle.²⁵ Still, Sprengtporten was a regular attendee and took part only in the most significant events, such as a July 22, 1799, dinner on the occasion of the name day of Empress Maria Feodorovna.²⁶

Paul I used the baron wherever he felt Sprengtporten could be of good service. At the beginning of 1799, Sprengtporten was instructed to inspect border fortifications in Russian Finland. He intended to take part in the military campaign to Italy. However, a fall and a broken arm during the inspection trip prevented him from realizing this intention. He led his usual way of life until the end of summer, 1800. But

upon his recovery he was called by His Majesty to Gatchina and remained with him until he got the order to go to France.²⁷

His attendance at “evening meals” together with the members of the imperial family and those closest to Paul I is recorded in the Kammerfurier journal for July – December 1800.²⁸ It is likely that he saw the Emperor for the last time on September 25, 1800, after which had an order to negotiate with Napoleon Bonaparte, the First Consul of the French Republic, on the return of the Russian prisoners captured in Italy and Corfu.

While in Europe, Sprengtporten entered into active correspondence with representatives of France, as evidenced by the documents from his personal archive.²⁹ Among them were General Henri-Jacques-Guillaume Clarke (future Marshal of France and Minister of War of France),³⁰ Minister of Foreign Affairs of France Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord.³¹ His efforts were directed toward obtaining acceptable conditions for the prisoners’ upkeep and solving problems of logistics connected with the prisoners’ route home, such as the need to negotiate with the German principalities for right of passage and for food supplies. Sprengtporten thus entered into correspondence with Baron Norman, Württemberg envoy to France,³² and Christian von Haugwitz, the Prime Minister of Prussia.³³ He received some assistance from Russian envoys at various European courts, the most significant of which was rendered by Baron Aleksey Ivanovich Kridener, a prominent Russian diplomat who served in Berlin.

During his stay in Europe, Sprengtporten associated with Major M.F. Stavitsky the 2nd (1778–1841), who took over a significant part of the clerical work. In particular, Stavitsky was responsible for preparing agreements with the German Electors, through whose lands the Russian soldiers were to pass. Stavitsky made frequent trips around Germany

²⁴ RGVIA, f. 489, op. 1, d. 7062, l. 105 ob.

²⁵ *Kamer-fur'yerskiy tseremonial'nyy zhurnal 1798 goda. Iyul' – dekabr'* (St. Petersburg: [S.n.], 1897), 1135.

²⁶ *Kamer-fur'yerskiy tseremonial'nyy zhurnal 1799 goda. Iyul' – dekabr'* (St. Petersburg: [S.n.], 1797), 1079.

²⁷ RGVIA, f. 489, op. 1, d. 7062, l. 105 ob.

²⁸ *Kamer-fur'yerskiy tseremonial'nyy zhurnal 1800 goda. Iyul' – dekabr'* (St. Petersburg: [S.n.], 1898), 219, 228, 234, 248, 254, 265, 268, 273, 276, 278, 282, 286, 289, 292, 300, 303, 306, 309, 313, 315.

²⁹ RGVIA, f. 846, op. 16, t. 1, d. 319.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, d. 320, l. 4–6.

³¹ *Ibid.*, l. 63–85.

³² *Ibid.*, l. 91–93.

³³ *Ibid.*, l. 101–102.

while Sprengtporten was in Berlin. Contemporaries noted the high cost of living there, and therefore those “business trips” required significant expenses. For example, Sprengtporten received 25 *chervontsy* to cover the cost of a four-hour carriage for conducting business in Leipzig in November 1800 for himself and Stavitsky.³⁴

According to the plan developed in March 1801, five columns of 1,300 soldiers each were to arrive in Naumburg on the Saxon border by 23 April/5 May. Sprengtporten and Stavitsky had to resolve issues of food supply for the troops and apartments for the officers before their arrival. Although time was short, Stavitsky succeeded in obtaining an agreement on May 11, 1801, with representatives of Saxony.³⁵ Sprengtporten signed it in Dresden. A week later, a similar agreement was signed with Prussia.³⁶ The result of this painstaking work was the return of 6,732 people, including 154 officers.³⁷ A great amount of money was spent on this. Subsequently, Sprengtporten had to provide arguments to justify the expenditure of roughly 200 thousand rubles.

Sprengtporten regularly reported on his actions to Paul I. At the initial stage of the diplomatic mission, the emperor looked favorably on his protégé, awarding him the insignia of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem.³⁸ On September 27, 1800, when Sprengtporten was still in St. Petersburg, Paul I showed his favor by appointing him chief of the Musketeer Regiment,³⁹ and on October 10, banners with a rescript were sent to “Baron Sprengtporten’s Musketeer Regiment.”⁴⁰ Once in Europe, however, the baron very quickly squandered his credit with the Emperor through his hedonistic lifestyle. An opponent of ostentatious luxury and extravagance, Paul I reacted extremely negatively to the balls that his representative gave in European cities. Indulgence was replaced by displeasure. This manifested itself in a change in the nature and content of the correspondence. Sprengtporten received an answer to his last dispatch not from the emperor, as in the past, but from vice-chancellor F.V. Rostopchin (some researchers consider S.A. Kolychev to be its author).⁴¹ This laconic missive indicated unequivocally that he should do “nothing besides extraditing prisoners,” and upon the completion of his mission, he was to return to Russia.⁴²

One further episode in Sprengtporten’s European mission is extremely interesting, connected to Malta. Occupied by the French during the Napoleonic wars, Malta was supposed to be transferred to Russia. Sprengtporten maintained that he himself was supposed to form and lead the La Valetta garrison. However, the British proved more efficient and occupied the island.

³⁴ RGVIA, f. 846, op. 16, t. 1, d. 321, l. 18.

³⁵ Ibid., d. 320, l. 65.

³⁶ Ibid., l. 66.

³⁷ Ordin, K.F. “Sprengtporten, geroi Finliandii,” 498.

³⁸ RGVIA, f. 489, op. 1, d. 7062, l. 103 ob.

³⁹ Ibid., f. 846, op. 16, t. 1, d. 319, ch. 9, l. 1.

⁴⁰ Ibid., l. 14.

⁴¹ Fajbisovich, V. “Russkaia kar’era generala Sprengtportena.” *Nashe Nasledie*, Accessed April 28, 2021, <http://www.nasledie-rus.ru/podshivka/7107.php>.

⁴² Ordin, K.F. “Sprengtporten, geroi Finliandii,” 498.

Sprengtporten generally succeeded in fulfilling the mission entrusted to him by Emperor Paul I, as the Russian prisoners did return to their homeland through his offices. However, his personal role was largely formal. He led a hedonistic life at the expense of the Russian treasury, whereas all the routine work was done by other people.

General Sprengtport's Service under Alexander I (1801–1809)

The death of Paul I saved Sprengtporten from disgrace. Alexander I, who ascended the throne, praised Yegor Maksimovich's diplomatic successes, bestowing the Order of Alexander Nevsky on him in the summer of 1801.⁴³

Alexander's reign ushered in a new phase of Sprengtporten's service to the Russian crown. Paul I had established a Cartographic Depot for the compilation of new maps and the description of interior and border regions, and this work intensified at the start of the 19th century. One of the founders of the Russian Imperial Mineralogical Society, Lorenz von Pansner, carried out immense work on trigonometric surveying in St. Petersburg, Moscow, and Novgorod provinces. By the mid-1810s he had finished drawing up a map of the Kolyvano-Voskresensky mountain district and part of Central Asia.⁴⁴

In 1802, Sprengtporten headed an expedition to carry out a military-strategic inspection of the border towns and fortresses of the Russian Empire. The trip involved collecting general information, rather than conducting topographic and cartographic work. Its character was largely determined by the composition of the expedition: the general was accompanied by aide-de-camp A.Kh. Benckendorf, Major M.F. Stavitsky, artist E.M. Korneev. There were no random people on the expedition. Benckendorff acted as a link with St. Petersburg. Stavitsky had already proved his capability during the joint mission in Europe. Korneev was at that time one of the most talented young Russian artists and he was included in the expedition as a pensioner of the Imperial Academy of Arts.

This trip is often referred to as a "secret expedition," but this is misleading. In February 1802, Adjutant General Lieven sent an order to the civilian governors whose provinces were on the travelers' route "to provide [them]... in all cases with all possible aid."⁴⁵ This order also obliged the governors to inform the central authorities about the activities of the participants of the mission. The governors reported on the stay of Sprengtporten and his companions in full detail. Thus, the Kostroma governor unwittingly confirmed the fact of Benckendorff's illness,⁴⁶ which he later described in his memoirs.⁴⁷ This illness forced them to prolong their stay in Kostroma. The Governor of Nizhny Novgorod informed the city authorities that during their short

stay here, on the first day Mr. Baron Sprengtporten examined the city, and the next day the institution of the Public Charity Order – a hospital, an almshouse and a public school, and in the morning of 15 [April 15. – *authors' note*] he went along the Volga to Kazan.⁴⁸

⁴³ RGIA, f. 496, op. 3, d. 31, l. 62 ob. – 63.

⁴⁴ See: Stokratskaya, L., Heide, G., Heide, B., Benkert, T., Talowina, I., Schajdurow, V., and Lorenz von Pansner. "Vom Schustersohn zum russisch en kaiserischen Staatsrat," in *Forscher – und Erfindergeistaus Arnstadt* (Erfurt, Sutton Verlag GmbH, 2017), 32–40.

⁴⁵ RGIA, f. 1374, op. 5, d. 24, l. 2.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, l. 10.

⁴⁷ Benckendorf, A.H. "Moe puteshestvie na krai nochi i k granitsam Kitaia (1802–1803 gg.)," *Nashe Nasledie*, Accessed April 28, 2021, <http://www.nasledie-rus.ru/podshivka/7106.php>.

⁴⁸ RGIA, f. 1374, op. 5, d. 24, l. 8.

Benckendorff provided a detailed description of their itinerary in his memoirs. The geographical scope of the trip is impressive. It stretched from the fortresses of the Siberian Cossack line – Semipalatinskaya and Ust-Kamenogorskaya in southwestern Siberia through the main Siberian cities – Tomsk, Krasnoyarsk, Irkutsk – to the border town Kyakhta, the only legal center of Russian-Chinese trade, in the Far East. Sprengtporten's travels did not end there. He returned to Central Russia in summer 1803, then set out again to Tsaritsyn, to the Caucasus, to Little Russia (Ukraine), Crimea, Turkey and the island of Corfu, a Russian protectorate since 1802.⁴⁹

The available materials allow us to draw the following conclusions. As in previous years, Sprengtporten performed formal representative functions during the mission. The main work of collecting information was carried out by Stavitsky and Benckendorf. The latter presented it to St. Petersburg in his reports, which, unfortunately, have not yet surfaced in the archives. The main success of the mission was linked to the creative activity of E.M. Korneev, who made numerous urban, landscape, ethnographic sketches. In 1812–1813, the expedition's materials were published in Paris by K. Rechberg and became the first album on the ethnography of Russia.⁵⁰

After the end of the expedition, the general returned to the “Finland issue”: in 1805, he submitted notes to Alexander I on the state of affairs in Poland and Finland, with a proposal for Finnish autonomy within the Russian Empire. During the Russian-Swedish war of 1808–1809 Sprengtporten's role was limited to advising infantry general F.F. Buxhoevden. They disagreed over the future structure of Finland. Whereas Buxhoevden favored a system of central administration of the Baltic provinces,⁵¹ Sprengtporten intended to make Finland independent, albeit within the confines of the Russian Empire.

One of the cornerstones of Finland's internal autonomy within the Russian Empire was the “Statute on the Establishment of the Main Directorate in New Finland.” Authorship of this document has been ascribed to various people. Some historians attribute it exclusively to Sprengtporten,⁵² while others note the participation of Minister of War A.A. Arakcheev and General B. von Knorring in its editing.⁵³ Baron Sprengtporten proposed a harmonious system of government for Finland under control of the Russian ministers and the Committee of Ministers as a whole. But Emperor Alexander I spoke in favor of the accountability of the Finnish Governor-General directly to the Emperor.

In November 1808, Alexander I appointed Sprengtporten as the first Governor-General of Finland. The short period of the Governorship General (until June 1809) was extremely difficult. The war was not yet over. The local population faced many problems. The elderly leader turned out to be unprepared to solve the everyday problems of the population of the new provinces in these unfavorable conditions. Responsible for food

⁴⁹ Sidorova, M.V. “Ekspeditsiia generala Sprengtporena po predelam Rossiiskoi imperii, kak ona opisana v memuarakh grafa A.H. Benckendorfa: Novoe otkrytie memuary grafa Benckendorfa kak istoricheskii istochnik.” *Nashe nasledie*, no. 71 (2004): 54–59.

⁵⁰ Rechberg, Ch. de. *Les peuples de la Russie ou description des moeurs, ...des diverses nations de l'empire de Russie* (Paris: D. Colas, 1812–1813).

⁵¹ *Modernizatsiia v okruzhenii: sluchai Finliandii*, 13.

⁵² Peksheva, L.A. *Deiatel'nost' M.M. Speranskogo v sfere mestnogo upravleniya*, 68.

⁵³ Suni, L.V. *Velikoe kniazhestvo Finliandskoe (pervaia polovina XIX v.). Stanovlenie avtonomii* (Petrozavodsk: Izd-vo PetrGU Publ., 2013), 18.

supply and the sanitary and epidemiological state of the territory, Sprengtporten essentially disengaged and shifted these tasks onto the shoulders of other officials.

In February 1809, the Governor-General was informed about the difficult situation in some parishes.⁵⁴ Local pharmacies lacked medicines and necessary medical equipment to fight an emerging epidemic. State secretary and rapporteur of Finnish affairs M.M. Speransky tried to solve the problem. Speransky helped facilitate the allocation of up to 5000 rubles worth of necessary pharmaceutical supplies from the Main Pharmacy Store in St. Petersburg.⁵⁵ This order, signed by Prince A.B. Kurakin, Minister of Internal Affairs, stipulated that the supplies be issued “to the person sent by General Sprengtporten.”⁵⁶ However, until September 1809, the medicines that the former Governor-General “had demanded with such urgency” were never sent to Finland, because no official was sent to St. Petersburg with an appropriate order. Kurakin expressed his bewilderment about it in a letter to Speransky dated September 19, 1809.⁵⁷ Unfortunately, it was not possible to organize the work of the medical service during that period. Sprengtporten's repeated demands to provide the population suffering from “infectious diseases” with medicines and medical equipment⁵⁸ could not be fulfilled for several months, since at first the Governor-General could not give “information where, what and how much supplies are needed,”⁵⁹ and then “the receiver did not come for them.”⁶⁰

In the context of the ongoing war, the food issue was if anything more pressing. The Finns' loyalty to the new Russian government depended to a large extent on the prompt solution of food shortages. This task fell on the shoulders of the newly-appointed Governor-General. But instead of buying cheap bread in the provinces of Finland least affected by the war in order to supply the “poor inhabitants” with it, Sprengtporten made the decision to transport supplies from Tver province by water. His plan had two shortcomings: it was also very expensive, and it could negatively affect the supply of bread to the capital.⁶¹

During that period, another problem was identified that required a prompt solution: the relationship between municipalities and central governmental authority in New Finland. Not without reason, Sprengtporten considered all issues related to the maintenance of the urban economy to fall under the sphere of municipal authority. However, lack of money compelled the municipal magistrates to turn to the Governor-General. Predictably, their requests were refused, as

the Finnish Governor-General... does not consider himself to be in charge of this matter.⁶²

In the end, the problem of who should deal with the cleaning of sewage in the town of Kuopio was solved only after the personal intervention of Emperor Alexander I, who ordered that further correspondence on this issue should cease, and

to prevent infectious diseases, which can arise from such uncleanness, the sanitation of this town will henceforth be the responsibility of military and civilian agencies.⁶³

⁵⁴ State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF), f. P8091, op. 1, d. 60, l. 1.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, l. 7.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, l. 10.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, d. 58, l. 3–3 ob.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, d. 60, l. 5.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, l. 9.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, d. 62, l. 9–12 ob.

⁶² *Ibid.*, d. 61, l. 1.

This unfavorable “legacy” was inherited by the new Governor-General, Mikhail B. Barclay de Tolly.⁶⁴ With an honorable resignation, Sprengtporten himself received the title of count of the Grand Duchy of Finland upon his honorable resignation, as well as another pension.⁶⁵ At the same time he was given “lifelong lease in Finland... of Bostel de Liliendal.”⁶⁶

G.M. Sprengtporten spent the last years of his life with his wife Varvara, who outlived her husband for almost 30 years.

Conclusions

The introduction of new historical sources into scholarly circulation has allowed us to assess the activities of Count G. M. Sprengtporten in the lawmaking, military, diplomatic, and administrative spheres. In so doing, we offer a holistic picture of the place and role of Count G.M. Sprengtporten in the Russian service in 1786–1809.

When he first entered the Russian service in the second half of the 1780s, Sprengtporten was unable to take the high place to which he secretly aspired. His excessive ambition and unsuccessful actions during the Russian-Swedish war (1788–1790) pushed Catherine II to exclude him from active work. In the last years of her reign, Sprengtporten was only listed in the Russian army, though he continued to receive a salary from the Treasury and a pension from the funds of the Cabinet.

During the reign of Paul I, Sprengtporten failed to prove himself an outstanding diplomat. Although the main goal of the mission entrusted to him was achieved, and more than 6.7 thousand Russian soldiers, sailors and officers returned to their homeland, Sprengtporten’s personal involvement turned out to be insignificant. He lost the emperor’s favor due to leading a hedonistic life in Europe at the expense of the Treasury.

G.M. Sprengtporten’s border mission had analogous results. The arrival of this official from the capital certainly “stirred up” the governors, but the expensive two-year expedition did not produce any concrete results beyond illustrations and ethnographic description of remote territories.

By contrast, his activities aimed at turning Finland into an independent state merit a positive assessment. Sprengtporten recognized autonomy as a necessary step on the way to independence. His legislative work in 1808 determined the nature of relations between the Grand Duchy of Finland and the Russian Empire, into which it now entered.

As Governor-General of Finland, Sprengtporten received a unique opportunity to implement his previous projects and plans. Yet the governor’s routine work proved to be a heavy burden for Sprengtporten. In fact, he disengaged from solving the pressing issues related to the daily life of Finland and its people. Although he had considerable experience, Sprengtporten was predominantly a theorist; he proved unable to realize his ambitions in practice and thereby earn recognition in the history of Finland and Russia as a successful administrator.

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⁶³ GARF, f. P8091, op. 1, d. 61, l. 1–1 ob.

⁶⁴ RGIA, f. 1286, op. 1, d. 131, l. 4.

⁶⁵ Mel’cin, M.O. “Sprengtporteny v Rossii: nedolgaja, no jarkajaistorija.” *Izvestia Russkogo genealogicheskogo obshhestva*, no. 24 (2012): 111.

⁶⁶ GARF, f. 489, op. 1, d. 7062, l. 107.

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