

Georgia between France, Russia and Iran Seen by French Diplomats

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Information of French emissaries about Georgia

As a result of much negotiation and a battle of wills between France, represented by Hugues-Bernard Maret, Secretary of State and Persian Plenipotentiary Mirza Mohammad Reza Khan Qazvini, a Treaty of Alliance between France and Persia was concluded on May 4, 1807, in the campe Imperial de Finkenstein, in Eastern Prussia. This treaty was composed of a preamble and 16 Articles. Articles 3 and 4 focused on the issue of Eastern Georgia.

What information did the Emperor of France have about Georgia that he promised to Shah?

It is a fact, that until 1805, before Napoléon sent French emissaries to Persia, Georgia was not included in the sphere of political interests of France, but by this time the French government already had some information about Georgia. We found the documents, dated 1795/96-1804, dealing with this theme in the Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France. The authors of these references were the General Consul of France in Bassora Jean-Francois Rousseau, Guillaume-Antoine Olivier, who was sent by the Directory to Agha Mohammad Khan in 1796, and the French Consul in Synop Pascal Fourcade.

Analysis of the above-mentioned documents shows that Georgia became known to Frenchmen as “a beautiful and wild country”, which was in the dominion of Russia, and which before 1783 was under the governance of Persia, and always paid tribute to it. When Agha Mohammad Khan the Ruler of Persia, learned that Erekle (Prince Heraclius) and his heirs recognized the supreme power of Russia, he became furious and ruined the capital of Georgia – Tiflis/Tbilisi. His warriors committed there

unbridled cruelty and barbarity¹. Russians did not participate in this war and continued trading via the Caspian Sea from Astrakhan to Rasht, Daruband and Baku, this fact was assessed as the Barbarian policy of Russia towards Georgia as the former had abandoned Georgia to Agha-Mohammad-Khan to loot and kill and later, to use their own military forces to conquer and retain it within its borders permanently. This news were aggravated by the escape of the Prince Alexandre to Persia provoked by the entering of the Kingdom of Kartli and Kakheti to Russia after the death of Erekle (1798). It is worthy of attention, that in the reports of Fourcade, Rousseau and Olivier the aspiration of Russia from 1783 is stressed to establish itself on the territories from

the port of Trabizond on the Black Sea in the Ottoman Empire to the port of Astarabad on the Caspian Sea in Persia because of their advantageous military and commercial locations².

This information was completed by references from the letter of Alexandre Romieu and the reports of Amédée Jaubert. Romieu who were very surprised by the

¹ Tiflis always attracted attention of the descendants of Agha Muhammad Khan. The book *Les by the late Head of the Qajar Imperial Family, Soltan Ali Mirza Qajar*, has the only illustration: "Agha-Muhammad-khan is depicted while taking Tiflis. In the Prologue the author writes: "In the house, we lived in the thirtieth years of the 20th century, my grand mother Malekeh Jahan, spouse of Mohammad Ali Shah, ordered to an Iranian painter a monumental picture, which represents Agha Muhammad Khan, the first great sovereign of our dynasty, while conquest of Tiflis, the capital of Georgia. We have this picture always with us and I made transport it to my new residence. Agha Muhammad Khan looks towards spectator and everybody feels the same I felt during my childhood..." Prince Ali Kadjar, *Les Rois oubliés, l'épopée de la dynastie Kadjare* (Paris: Kian, 1992), 7. The hand of the khan – eunuch on horseback, – stretched towards Tiflis reminds us too much the famous gesture of Bonaparte on the painting of David.

² Archives du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères: Mémoires et Documents, Perse, vol. 2, doc. 29, fol. 141r-147v; Correspondances Politiques, Perse, vol. 8: doc. 156, fol. 384r-384v; doc. 157, fol. 385r-385v; doc. 158, fol. 386r.

weakness of the Persian militia. He stressed the that Russia did not have more than 10-12 thousand soldiers in Georgia, but with these few forces it resisted successfully the army of Persia, which contained from forty to eighty thousand soldiers³. According to the information of Jaubert, Russia kept the territories that it occupied between the rivers of Aras and Kura. The wintering place for the Russian army was Tiflis. The people in Georgia were extremely displeased of the domination by Russians and because of the “lecherous habits and shameful corruption” of their army, the Russians lost the sympathy of a great part of the population of Georgia⁴.

The manuscript *Tableau General de la Perse Moderne* written at the request of Napoléon by Joseph Rousseau, the son of the commissar of the commercial relations of France in Baghdad Jean-François Rousseau, was in the hands of Talleyrand already in August 1806⁵. There, Rousseau gives information about the frontiers of Georgia, its climate, its fertile area, its population, touches upon the invasion of Agha Mohammad Khan in Georgia, and finishes the subsection with the following conclusion: “The Georgians awaken from their idea about the moderateness of Russian rule. They are already complaining because of the severity of the Russians and are waiting impatiently the opportunity to take off their heavy yoke, similar to that of the Persians, but one that they themselves put on”⁶. The separation of the theme of Georgia as a subtitle together with the theme of the Kingdom of Qandahar and Zabulistan, which had strategic importance in the itinerary of the expedition against India⁷, underlines once more the geopolitical importance of Eastern Georgia, which was already part of Russia.

The third volume of *Voyage dans l'Empire Ottoman, l'Égypte et la Perse* by G.-A. Olivier, which was persistently demanded by Napoléon⁸, was issued in 1807 when the Financhenstein contract was signed. In Chapter XX there is information about the relations of Persia with Georgia. Olivier note that after the conquest of the southern provinces of Persia “Agha Mohammad Khan could not give up his rights that he had upon Georgia, as otherwise he would compromise his honor and the crown would be usurped by him”. This reference of Olivier clearly shows how important the integration of Georgia as part of Persia was for the new dynasty of the Qajars from a moral and political point of view. The mentioning of the kingdom of

³ AMFAE, CP/Perse, vol. 9, doc. 27, fol. 58v, 59v-60v.

⁴ AMFAE, CP/Perse, vol. 8 doc. 133, fol. 334r-334v; AN, AF IV, 1686, doc. 16, fol. 5-7, 15.

⁵ AMFAE, CP/Perse, vol. 9, doc. 41, fol. 83r-83v.

⁶ AMFAE, MD/Perse, vol. 6, doc. 19, fol. 167r-168r.

⁷ AMFAE, CP/Perse, vol. 8, doc. 165, fol. 399r.

⁸ Paul Gaffarel, *La politique coloniale en France de 1789 à 1830* (Paris: Felix Alcan, 1908), 391.

Kartli and Kakheti as the “Georgia of Persia” by the French author⁹, reinforced in the mind of Europeans the idea that Georgia was a country which belonged to Persia and was taken away by Russia by force.

The French Press on Georgia

In response to the missions sent to Persia by Napoléon, in March 1807, the Ambassador of Fath-Ali Shah, Mirza Mohammad Reza Khan Qazvini, arrived to Warsaw, and Napoléon decided to conclude an alliance with Persia. As early as January 1807 French newspapers started publication series of articles about Persia and showed it as the potential ally of France in an extremely positive light¹⁰. It is very significant, that information about Georgia was published also in March and April in three issues of *Journal de l'Empire*. The author of these large articles the famous scholar Conrad Malt-Brune presented to readers quite wide review of the Georgian history, religion, culture and civilization. In all probability, the profuse elucidation of the Georgian theme was not accidental and served the interests of the French government: in the introduction of the first letter (March 10, 1807), Malt-Brune mentioned that the official documents of the government of France indicated the expansion of Russia in the direction of the Caucasus. While turning attention to the Caucasus, one could see that Georgia was turned into a province of Russia, and that the rebellious peoples of the Caucasus were surrounded by “the army of Moscow” from all sides. Because of this, Persia and Asian Turkey had no more natural frontier with Georgia. According to his comments, in this beautiful country, conquered by the Russians, geographers, nature historians, historians and men of letters could find interesting events, beautiful nature, ancient people, less known languages, and finally a wide field for scientific research. In addition, the Malt-Brune gave general information about the Caucasus¹¹.

Thus, the French press showed the potential ally of France – Persia- in an extremely positive light and at the same time it published several important articles about Georgia, a country, which was far less known in Europe. By means of these articles Georgia was fixed in the minds of the European reader not only in its connection with Persia, the Ottoman Empire and Russia, but also with India. The fact, that it was Malt-Brune, who wrote these articles, makes us think, that the profuse elucidation of the theme of Georgia before the conclusion of the Franco-Persian Treaty, served the

⁹ Guillaume-Antoine Olivier, Voyage dans l'Empire Othoman, l'Égypte et la Perse, fait par ordre du Gouvernement, pendant les six premières années de la République (Paris : Chez H. Agasse, 1807), III, 404,409, 420.

¹⁰ Le Moniteur, 1807: 13.01; 27.01; 22.02; 23.03; 2.04; 19.04; 19.04; 31, 1807: 26.02; 22.03; 27.03; 16.04; 20.04; 27.04.

¹¹ Journal de l'Empire, 1807: Vendredi, 10 Mars; Samedi, 18 Mars; Samedi, 6 Avril.

interests of the government. This testifies how important the powerful weapon of propaganda was in influencing public opinion. Napoléon was perfectly aware of this and took advantage of it when he needed to¹². At the same time, it is clear, that the Emperor of France was so sure of his own invincibility that he was not afraid to exasperate England or Russia by publishing information of this kind.

The Issue of Georgia in the Franco-Persian Treaty Draft and in the Franco-Persian Treaty

But before the final formulation of the text of the Finkenstein Treaty, in April 1807 (the day is not mentioned) in Warsaw the government of France elaborated the Franco-Persian Draft Treaty – *Projet du Traité entre S. M. l'Empereur des Français Roi d'Italie et S. M. l'Empereur de Perse*, Avril, 1807. These documents consisted also of 16 articles, the third and the fourth articles concerned to Georgia, and were formulated as follows: “Article 3. In case the Persian army takes Georgia from



Russians and takes possession of Tiflis, His Majesty the Emperor of the French, King of Italy, undertakes to help to have stipulated in the treaty a guarantee of the full and entire sovereignty over this province for His Majesty the Emperor of Persia. Article 4. In this same case his Majesty the Emperor of Persia will agree to send to his Majesty the Emperor of France annually the necessary quantity of Georgian Mameluks for the purpose of having full complement of Mameluks attached to his guards”¹³.

Most probably, while including Tiflis into article 3 of the Draft Treaty, the above-mentioned information about the destruction of Tiflis by Agha Mohammad Khan was taken into consideration. Thus, for the French,

this city was associated with a totally ruined city, the conquest of which would not

¹² Jean Tulard, *Napoléon ou le mythe du sauveur* (Éditeur: Fayard 1995), 35.

¹³ AMFAE, CP/Perse, vol. 9, doc. 94, fol. 161r-163v.

be difficult. We suppose, that in the process of elaborating of Franco-Persian Treaty, Napoléon took into consideration the reference of Amédée Jaubert to the fact that the wintering barracks of the Russian army during the Russo-Persian war (1804-1813) were located exactly in Tiflis¹⁴, and thus that the city would be properly defended.

The Article 4 of the Draft Treaty is worthy of attention as it reveals Napoléon's interest to have Georgian soldiers, called Mameluks, in his personal guards. It seems that Bonaparte, at the time of his being in Egypt, became convinced of the martial merits of Mameluks, bought in the Caucasus and Georgia, whom he calls slaves in his famous *Manifesto*. Also, Jaubert, who accompanied Napoléon in his Egyptian Expedition, calls Mameluks the famous brave warriors¹⁵, and Joseph Rousseau emphasized that Persians appreciated the courage and faithfulness of Georgians¹⁶.

Thus, Napoléon's opinion that the Georgian soldiers would fight in India much better than European soldiers was not far-fetched.

According the Franco-Persian Treaty, it was an "equal obligation for peace, friendship and union" between France and Persia (Art. 1). Napoléon guaranteed to the Shah of Persia "territorial integrity

of his land of that time" (Art. 2), recognized Georgia as the legal property of Shah (Art. 3), charged himself to force the Russians to leave the territories of Persia and Georgia (Art. 4). Consequently, modified articles 3 and 4 touched Georgia again.

It should be noted that the Articles 2 of the Treaty defined only vague obligations towards Persia, because Napoléon guaranteed the Shah of Persia the inviolability of his territory at that time, and this logically implied the territory that was within the borders of Persia during the preparation of the Treaty, and not the territory obtained afterwards. In the Treaty the territory of Georgia was not precisely defined, because

¹⁴ AN, AF IV, 1686, doc. 16, fol. 5.

¹⁵ Pierre-Amédée Jaubert, *Voyage en Arménie et en Perse, fait dans les années 1805-1806* (Paris: Chez Pélicier, 1821), 179.

¹⁶ AMFAE, MD/Perse, vol. 6, doc. 19, fol. 98v-99r.

there were no maps or any other identification documents of Persia or Georgia. It is highly likely that the Persians understood Georgia as the Kingdom of Kartli and Kakheti i.e. Eastern Georgia, which, from 1801 was already a part of Russia. Thus, articles 3 and 4 of the Treaty¹⁷, which were made to incite the interest of Persia, were made very farsightedly by France: the Article 2 from the beginning gave France the possibility of maneuvering according to its own interests as the political events of the world developed, and afterwards things happened exactly in accord with France's anticipation.

In Articles 3 and 4 of the Treaty, Napoléon seems to have paid no attention to the plans of the Russians in the Trans-Caucasus (South Caucasus) and the Caspian Basin reported by French emissaries. It seems that Napoléon was in such a hurry to intervene in India, that he gave preference to Fath-Ali Shah's message communicated to him by Jaubert, that if after driving the Russians to their own desert, Napoléon would decide to pass with his army through his lands, the Shah would prove his true friendship to him, and he, himself, would participate in this expedition¹⁸. It is very important to note that the only opponent of Jean-François Rousseau (who proposed to Napoléon the plan on how to drive away the Englishmen from India¹⁹), *l'Adjudant-Général* Alexandre Romieu, was already dead, but J.-F. Rousseau's plan for the Indian expedition was still of urgent importance. The eye-witness emissary of Napoléon who brought news from Persia was Jaubert, who had several conversations with two persons who were supporting France – Crown Prince Abbas Mirza, the greatest enemy of Russia, and the First Vizier of Fath-Ali Shah – Mirza Shafi. The main issue of their discussions was the Russo-Persian war. Concerns, expressed by Fath-Ali Khan, the Naib of Azerbaijan's Beglarbegi, in a conversation with Jaubert, in May 1806, indicates the stereotypical attitude of Persian high officials towards Georgia: "As our present-day Lord (Fath-Ali Shah – I.N.) has taken possession of the reins of power, with his high and mighty hand he has united everything, all Persia obeys him, excluding Georgia, the province, which, actually is not a part of the Empire for a long time²⁰. It should be taken into consideration that the Emperor trusted Jaubert very much who had accomplished a

¹⁷ "Article 3: His Majesty, the Emperor of France, the King of Italy, recognized Georgia as belonging legitimately to His Majesty, the Emperor of Persia. Article 4: His Majesty, the Emperor of France, the King of Italy, undertakes to direct every effort toward compelling Russia to withdraw from Georgia and Persian territory. This withdrawal will be the constant goal of his policies" (AMFAE, CP/Perse, vol. 9, doc. 95, fol. 164r; Jacob Coleman Hurewitz, *The Middle East and North Africa in World Politics: A Documentary Record*, Second Edition, Revised and Enlarged (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1975) I, 184.

¹⁸ AN, AF IV, 1686, doc. 16, fol. 8, 21-24.

¹⁹ AMFAE, CP/Perse, vol. 8, doc. 64, fol. 182r-189v.

²⁰ Jaubert, *Voyage*, 163, 225.

number of Napoléon's diplomatic assignments in different parts of the Ottoman Empire, after returning from Egypt. It is noteworthy that the copy of the Franco-Persian Treaty was entrusted to Chevalier Jaubert²¹.

So, by giving the first priority to the issue of Georgia in this treaty, Napoléon outlined the prospect of resolving the most important issue for Persia – liberation of Georgia for Persia and built his relations with Persian Empire upon this promise.

The Issue of Georgia in the Diplomatic Negotiations of General Gardane (1807-1809)

A few days after the conclusion of the Finkenstein Treaty, on May 10, 1807, Napoléon gave to General Gardane detailed instructions about his mission in Persia. Gardane was charged to get complete information particularly about Persia and the routes to India, to organize a vigorous diversion near the Russian frontier at a suitable moment, to provide opportunity to Persia to return the provinces of Georgia, robbed of them by the Russians by means of "army and intrigues," that the Russians made the "last prince of this country (Georgia) to give up." Persia was considered as the enemy of Russia and the way by which they could go to India for an expedition²².

And yet, 65 days after the conclusion of the Finkenstein Treaty with Persia, on July 7, 1807, in Tilsit a treaty of peace between Napoléon and the Emperor of Russia - Alexander the First was concluded²³. There was no mention of Persia at all, and in fact it canceled the Franco-Persian Treaty. Thus, Napoléon did not take into consideration the following will of Fath-Ali Shah: "I will ask him (Napoléon) to make an alliance based on our interests, according to which no peace will be established by the King of Persia with Russia without participation of the French Emperor. On the other hand, Napoléon will not negotiate with this state without taking into account the interests of Persia"²⁴.

In spite of the conclusion of two contradictory treaties, the French Mission arrived in Tehran on December 4, 1807. The instructions about the Indian expedition were not changed, but at this time the General Gardane was charged to arrange peace between Russia and Persia²⁵. On February 20, 1808, during the negotiations of the Plenipotentiary Minister of France and the First Vizier Mirza Shafi, in answer to the

²¹ AMFAE, CP/Perse, vol. 9, doc. 97, fol. 166r-167v.

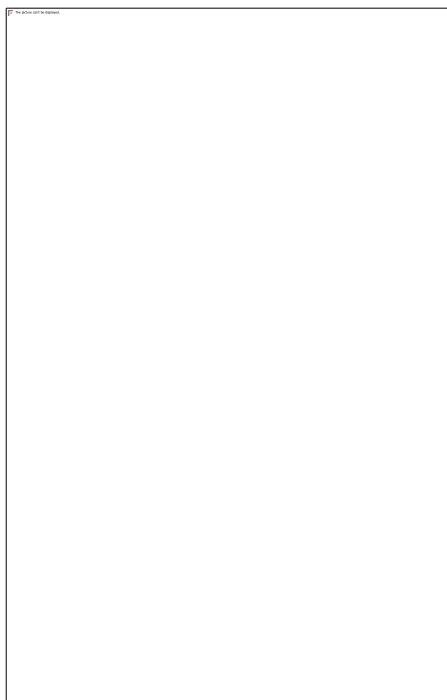
²² AMFAE, Protocoles. Copie des instructions verser M. le général Gardane. Au camp Imperial de Finkenstein, le 10 mai, 1807, fol. 2-3.

²³ Albert Vandal, Napoléon et Alexandre Ier, l'Alliance Russe sous le Premier Empire, De Tilsit à Erfurt (Paris: E. Plon, Nourrit et Cie: 1891), I, 499-504.

²⁴ Archives Nationales, France. AF IV, 1686, doc. 16, fol. 22.

²⁵ AMFAE, MD/Perse, vol. 8, doc. 2, fol. 50v.

question of the General: “What does his Majesty know about the sympathy of Georgians towards him?” - the Vizier answered as follows: “As many of the children of Heraclius Khan (Erekle the Second) and most of the senior noble Georgians are at the court of Abbas Mirza, many families sympathize with us, but the majority of people went over to the Russian side, as they joined them only because of their religion, which draws them together with the Russians”. Mirza Shafi exaggerated the number of Erekle’s sons because only the mentioned Princes Alexandre and Teimuraz were at the court of the Prince. At the same time the Vizier did not hide the main reason why the Eastern Georgians took the Russians side – it was the common religion. In answer to the question of the Frenchman: “What was the purpose of his



Majesty Fath-Ali Shah when he entrusted his interests to his Imperial Majesty the Emperor Napoléon”? – Mirza Shafi answered: “As his Majesty handed his fate to his brother, Emperor Napoléon, the greatest will of ours is to return Georgia, Dagestan and Erevan by the most acceptable way to Persia, and also that the Russians would not saddle us with indemnities for the war against them. They will never achieve this. At last we trust in the fairness, sincerity and attention of our brother”. This answer of the First Vizier of the Shah shows that the main condition of the relations between Persia and France was the returning of Georgia to Persia together with the territories conquered by Russia during the war and not participation in the Indian expedition.

During the same negotiations, the attitude of the Tehran Court towards the application of a European (French) military system to the Persian army was as follows: the Vizier cited the example of the Ottoman Sultan Selim the Third, who had applied the European military system to his army only to be dethroned by the said army when it rebelled against military innovations. That’s why the Persians were very prudent with this issue. By the decision of Fath-Ali Shah, this reform would be carried out at first only by Abbas Mirza in Azerbaijan, and “when the Persians would become convinced in advantage of this reform and the eye get accustomed to this new rule”, the Shah would apply it to the whole Empire²⁶. The

²⁶ AMFAE, MD/Perse, vol. 6, doc. 25, fol. 177r-178r.

reason of Fath-Ali-Shah's prudence was not only the Ottoman example. According to the information of the Secretary of the Embassy of England in Persia in the years 1807-1811, James Morier "The French at this time were very anxious to proceed to Shiraz, to drill the new-raised corps; but as the king prevented them in a former instance from sending a resident to Bushire, lest they should have found that the English factory was still in Persia, he now equally prevented their advancing to Shiraz, lest the English in their turn should discover the arrival of their competitors"²⁷. So, Fath-Ali Shah was not only waiting for the Persians to get accustomed to the European military style to "apply these reforms", but also tried to avoid antagonizing his southern neighbor, the leaders of the East-Indian company. The Shah made a pragmatic decision by applying the new military rules in Azerbaijan. He hoped to liberate the territories occupied by Russians and to "regain control" over the territory of Georgia.

After the Treaty of Tilsit Russians were free in their actions towards Persia. On May 1808 the Marshal Gudovich demanded that the court of Tehran recognize the territories already occupied by Russia and in exchange suggested concluding an armistice for a year. The Shah categorically rejected this offer, and the government of France rejected peace negotiations with Russia in favour of Persia²⁸. The position of France towards this issue is obvious from the letter, sent in June 1808 from the Minister Champagny to Gardane. The Minister pointed out to the General, that the Finkenstein Treaty "confirmed only the territorial integrity of Persia of that time", and because "they had lost Georgia already, after the Treaty of Tilsit France could not interfere in the issue of returning of the territories occupied by Russians"²⁹. For his part the General Gardane warned Champagny, that Persia would do nothing against India before he did not arrange its relations with Russia³⁰.

Lack of consideration from France for the Russo-Persian issue complicated the situation of the Plenipotentiary Minister of France. In such circumstances, on August 20, 1808, during the audience the Shah demanded from the General Gardane to clarify with Napoléon the issue of driving away of Russians³¹. That's why on August 26, Gardane wrote to Champagny that "as long the territory of Persia would be open

²⁷ James Morier, *A Journey Through Persia, Armenia, and Asia Minor, to Constantinople, in the Years 1808 and 1809* (London: Printed for Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1812), 30.

²⁸ AMFAE, MD/Perse, vol. 8, doc. 25, fol. 245v-246r.

²⁹ Edouard Driault, *La politique orientale de Napoléon – Les missions de Sébastiani et de Gardane, 1806-1809* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1904) 329.

³⁰ Alfred de Gardane, *Mission du Général Gardane en Perse sous le Premier Empire* (Paris: Librairie de Ad. Lainé, 1865) 182.

³¹ Dumas, *Un fourrier de Napoléon vers l'Inde*, 62-63.

for Russia, the Shah would do nothing against Hindustan, and would do nothing on the whole, as long as Georgia would still be in possession of Russia". Persians considered that the Russians were transgressing their territorial integrity by marking the limits near Kura, Araks and Arpachay, despite the fact that, in the Article 2 of the Franco-Persian Treaty, Napoléon had guaranteed the territorial integrity of Persia.³² Moreover, the Shah demanded fulfillment of the Articles 3-4 and required the Russians to leave Georgia and return "without a shot" the territories occupied by them³³. General Gardane had a very complicated situation.

On September 14, 1808 the Marshal Gudovich sent an ultimatum to Abbas Mirza. Gudovich urgently advised him to ratify the treaty he had suggested before and warned that Russia was the kind of state that could not be stopped by anything. Concretely, this meant that Persia had to give up Georgia forever and cede the Yerevan fortress and Echmiadzin.³⁴ In case of acceptance of the peace proposed by him, the trade between Russia and Persia would give the Prince more profit than war, the Russia would recognize Baba-Khan as the Shah of Persia, and Abbas Mirza as the heir to the throne. Gudovich promised to help Persia while conquering Baghdad, and the provinces of Basra and Bayazed, and noted that accepting his offer the Prince would benefit most of all regarding the fact that he had not the full right to claim the throne, as his elder brother Mohammad Ali Mirza *Dolatshah* had³⁵ to claim to the throne of Persia³⁶. Abbas Mirza rejected the offer of Russia. At the same time with these events, at the end of September 1808, Napoléon was negotiating with European monarchs against England in Erfurt. In October 1808 they published the details of

³² The lands which Russia actually claimed from Iran were the territories of semi-independent principalities (khanates) with multiethnic Muslim and Christian population ruled by local Turkic (Azerbaijani) dynasties.

³³ Gardane, Mission, 182-184, 186-187, 192-194.

³⁴ Yervan was a political center of Yerevan (Erevan, Irevan) Khanate ruled by a local branch of Qajar dynasty. By the time of Russian expansion, the majority of population of the Yerevan khanate (80%) were Muslims (Azeri Turks, Kurds and Persians) with Christian minority (mostly Arenians). – Kettenhofen Erich, Bournoutian George A. and Hewsen Robert H. Erevan, *Encyclopedia Iranica*, Vol. VIII, Fasc. 5, pp. 542-551. (<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/erevan-1#ii>)

³⁵ Mohammad Ali Mirza Dolatshah (1789-1821) the governor of Mountainous Kurdistan, Kuzestan and Lorestan from 1806 till his death in 1821, was the firstborn son of Fath Ali Shah. His mother Zibachehr Khanum was a Georgian slave girl of the Tsikarishvili family. Zurab Sharashenidze, *Iranis shinalpolitikuri vitareba da sagareo urtiertobani XIX saukunis dasackisshi* (Tbilisi: Mecniereba, 1984), 36.

³⁶ Akty, vol. III, doc. 836, pp. 464-465; doc. 849, pp. 475-476.

the meeting of Erfurt in *Journal de l'Empire*, and expressly noted the kind relationships between the emperors of France and Russia³⁷.

As a result, on September 25 the Marshal Gudovich camped near Erevan and commenced military operations. After the beginning of the siege of the Yerevan Fortress, the English demanded that the Shah receive the British Envoy Sir Harford Jones Brydges, and establish relations with England. The Envoy promised him assistance and the return of the territories occupied by the Russians, including Georgia³⁸. In case of failure they would support the Zand's claim on the Persian throne and will go to war against Fath-Ali Shah³⁹.

On November 23, during which Fath-Ali Shah declared that he no longer had doubts about the friendship of France and Russia and reminded the General about the contents of the Finkenstein Treaty, that he himself had brought in the name of France and of which no point had been fulfilled⁴⁰. The Shah demanded new troops from the French for the liberation of Georgia⁴¹.

Although the Marshal Gudovich could not take the Yerevan stronghold⁴², and blamed Gardane's activities against Russia as a reason of this failure, Abbas Mirza complained, that the General Gardane was not helping him, because he had not received Napoléon's order on this issue⁴³. Thus, both parties were blaming the General Gardane, who was using his discretion to follow two contradictory treaties, both concluded by Napoléon.

Under these circumstances Fath-Ali Shah decided to receive the British Envoy Sir Hartford Jones Brydges. The general Gardane, who was in a hard situation from all points of view, was insulted by this decision and on February 13, 1809 left Tehran for Tabriz.

On March 12, 1809 a treaty was concluded between England and Persia, which annulled all other agreements concluded earlier with any other countries⁴⁴. Sir Harford Jones Brydges appealed to the court of Tehran, to renew the war with Russia with all force, and assured him that by means of innumerable treasures of India the

³⁷ *Journal de l'Empire*, 1808: Lundi, 7 Octobre; Lundi 10 Octobre; Mardi 11 Octobre; Mercredi 12 Octobre; Samedi 15 Octobre; Dimanche 16 Octobre.

³⁸ Gardane, *Mission*, 247–252.

³⁹ AMFAE, CP/Perse, vol. 10: doc. 220, fol. 440r–443v; doc. 225, fol. 450r–452r.

⁴⁰ Gardane, *Mission*, 230–248.

⁴¹ AMFAE, CP/Perse, vol. 11, doc. 65, fol. 110r–112r.

⁴² Acty, vol. III, doc. 895, pp. 508–510.

⁴³ AMFAE, CP/Perse, vol. 10, doc. 279, fol. 470r.

⁴⁴ AMFAE, MD/Perse, vol. 6, doc. 40, fol. 221r.

army of Persia would easily conquer Georgia⁴⁵. So, the British Envoy used for his policy the primary political course of France chosen in order to interest Persia in liberating Georgia from Russia. Thus, in this short period of history the defense of India – the “best pearl of the King of England” – from the possible Indian expedition of Napoléon via Persia, in a sense was secured via Eastern Georgia i.e. the former kingdom of Kartli and Kakheti, which already was a part of Russia, and which was compared to an “ornament” by Mirza Bozorg⁴⁶, the First Vizier of Abbas Mirza.

On his own decision on April 17 General Gardane accompanied by his mission members left Persia for Europe via Erevan and Tiflis⁴⁷. Here the importance of the city of Tiflis became clear as transit center between Persia and Europe, which was the result of the French-Russian Treaty of Tilsit.

Lieutenant Trézel's report “Notice on Georgia”

In the archives of the Ministry of Defense of France is kept one manuscript, entitled “Notice sur la Géorgie”, dated by 31 May 1809, and signed by the lieutenant Camille-Alphonse Trézel⁴⁸, the aide-de camps of the General Gardane. Lieutenant Trézel describes in details the itinerary of the French mission from Yerevan to Mozdok via Tbilisi/Tiflis in May 1809. “Notice” gives information about the landscape, roads, population (amount, nationality, religion, occupation), small settlements, agriculture, military forces of Russia and relations of the Russians with Georgians and Caucasian mountaineers.

Lieutenant Trézel draws a vivid picture of Tiflis which gradually adopted some traits of the European cities under the Russian rule. He wrote: “After two years of life in

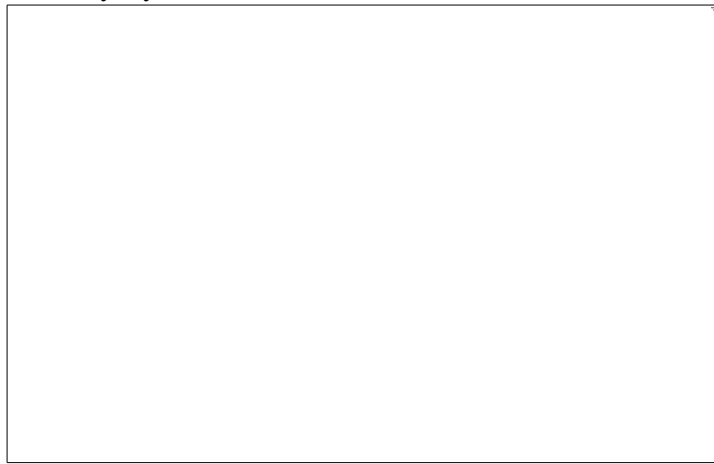
⁴⁵ AMFAE, CP/Perse, vol. 14, doc. 289, fol. 294r-297r.

⁴⁶ James Morier writes: “In one of our conferences with Mirza Bozork, in which the utility of Georgia to Persia as a possession was discussed, he made a remark that was truly characteristic of an Asiatic logician. Taking hold of his beard, he said, “This is of no use, but it is an ornament”. James Morier, *A Second Journey Through Persia, Armenia, and Asia Minor to Constantinople, Between the Years 1810 and 1816* (London: Printed for Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1818), 217.

⁴⁷ On August 17th, 1809 the General Gardane wrote to the Minister Champagny that he accomplished the instructions, received in Finkenstein, but as he had no indications about the arrival of the English to Persia, and their reception at Tehran's Court, he had nothing to do in Persia and he was unable “to drive away the English, the Persians were in ecstasies over” (AMFAE, CP/Perse, vol. 12, doc. 81, fol. 145r). On his arrival to France on September 29th, Gardane again sent Champagny a very short card, in which he wrote that he had “by leaving Persia had taken care of the dignity of France and the interests, entrusted to him” (AN, AF, 1686 IV¹, doc. 11).

⁴⁸ Camille Alphonse Trézel (1780-1860) was General of division (1837), (1837), Peer of France (1846), and Minister of War (1847-1848).

silent Asian towns, we enjoyed the life of a Christian city very much and those thousand things, we did not pay attention to before or considered as annoying. The noise of bullock-carts, charged with food, arms and ammunition, fast motion of several expensive carriages, uneven sound of church bells, noisy markets, where Georgians, Armenians, Persians⁴⁹ and very many Russian soldiers are mixed together, songs, music of troops – a jumble of innovations, everything like this reminded us our native country and caused a strange emotion for us”. He describe the everyday life of Tiflis inhabitants. Unlike Asia, the houses in Tiflis had not high



fences, and Every family passed their evenings in open and slightly elevated terraces. These families were looking and seeing each other and were talking. The ladies, after going out from the churches were walking and this made beautiful the

environments gardens. It was also a pleasure to look at Georgian ladies, adorned with natural beauty, walking by the river in a beautiful evening of May. Their forehead was encircled by a small white diadem with a long flax voile, which fell behind to the ground and made their bodies slim and brilliant. Such a detailed description of Tiflis women was one of the examples of European customs and one of the signs of principally important differences from the oriental urban life for the French officer: there the women did not appear on public among men at all and for visiting relatives or going to baths came out from houses only covered with chador and accompanied.

The Emperor Alexander the First, informed about General Gardane's desire to go to France via Tiflis, ordered to the a commander-in-chief in the Caucasus (1809-1811) General Tormasov to receive the French mission with great respect. At the gala dinner, arranged by General Tormasov for the French mission, Trézel met the former

⁴⁹ Muslim population, overwhelmingly of Turkic ethnicity in the lands of the South Caucasus disputed between Russia and Persia used to be referred in reports of clashing superpowers of the time and external actors as Persians due to their Muslim, mostly Shiite identity and political links of ruling local dynasties to Qajar dynasty of Iran. Majority of Muslim community in Tiflis that time were Azerbaijani Turks.

queen of Imereti⁵⁰, then on the eve of taking his son⁵¹ to a college in St. Petersburg; Prince Anton⁵², wearing the dignity of catholicos; and the princess, his sister⁵³ - both children of the last vâli Heraclius [Erekle the Second]; the Armenian Patriarch⁵⁴; and a Georgian Seignior – brother of the General Prince Bagrationi. None of the guests understood either French, or Russian, but it was evident that everybody did well at the European dinner. Tormasov wanted to demonstrate to the envoys of Napoleon a good relation between the Russian authorities and the most brilliant and outstanding Georgians. Also, he showed that the political orientation of the royal family was not unanimous. The Russians knew that the most important personalities had relations with the Persians, and two Georgian Royal Princes Alexandre, son of the king Erekle the Second, and Teimuraz, the son of George the Twelfth, were emigrants in Persia.

The last chapter of the “Notice”, entitled “The Condition of the Russians in Georgia” deserves a special attention. Like other French agents, the Lieutenant Trézel also touches upon conclusion of the treaty with Russia by the King Erekle the Second in 1783, devastation of Tbilisi in 1795 by Agha-Mohammad-Khan and taking young Georgian boys and girls to Persia as captives, a great part of whom served on low posts in government and army during his being in Persia.

Trézel writes that all mountain peoples separately struggled against Russia, that needed to put many small fortified garrisons for protecting the carriages, which were coming from Mozdok to Tiflis via the still impassable roads. Communication of the headquarters with the military units, connected with the everyday provision with food of the Cossacks, dislocated in different places, was also dangerous. The Cossacks could not leave their posts because of fear of attacks of Lezgins, Ossethians or Turks, that was justified: a little earlier before coming of the French mission to Tiflis the Lezgins had stolen all the horses of Kherson Infantry, located in a league from the city. Bambak and Gyumri regiments dislocated on the Kars way, getting food and ammunition from Tiflis were also detached from the other part of the army. They would get in a very critical situation, if Persians and Akhaltsikhe Turks

⁵⁰ Here is meant the daughter of the prince Mamuka Orbeliani Anna, a spouse of the King of Imereti David the Second (1784-1789).

⁵¹ Their son – the prince Constantine was participating in the Patriotic war of 1812, and was awarded the Order of Vladimir. In Russia his sons were called “Imeretinski” or “Bagration-Imeretinski”.

⁵² Anton II (1764-1827) – Catholicos-Patriarch of the East Georgia, a son of Erekle the Second. His laic name was Teimuraz Bagrationi. In 1811 he was summoned to Russia, he lived in Nijni-Novgorod, he is buried there, in the Temple of Announcement.

⁵³ We assume that the princess whose name was not mentioned was the Princess Teklé, the youngest daughter of Erekle II, and the wife of the Colonel of the Russian army Vakhtang Orbeliani,

⁵⁴ Armenian Catholicos Nerses (1760-1857).

attacked them simultaneously from the both riversides of Lori for taking away a carriage and running after them. The lieutenant was sure unifying Persians' and Turks' forces in Georgia would cause a very dangerous war for the Russians, as the Russians still had not occupied the towns of Akhaltsikhe, Kars, Bayazid, Yerevan and Nakhtchevan.

Lieutenant paid attention to that important fact that the Generals, sent to Caucasus, had received order from the Russian Government to treat local population gently and with respect for gaining confidence of the recently conquered country. The French officer was disgusted when experienced Russian officers, holders of orders, were giving all kind military honors to a chief of any tribe, who allowed himself to accept the rank of a major or a colonel in the army. The Russian officers were forced always beg their support when they had to pass a military vehicle via their property: the safe-conduct, as big and strong it were, would be annihilated, if the chief of the Ossethians himself or together with his armed robbers did not strengthen it. For this service they always paid them very well.

According to Camil Trézel's information, the main families of the Georgians had increased rights and positions. Many so called "tavadi" (princes) received pension from the Russian Government. In Tbilisi were established a seminary and a military school, noted also by General Gardane⁵⁵. The Russian Emperor had depensed much money for constructiong the roads for carriages from Tbilisi to Mozdok. The Russian troops, dislocated in Georgia paid more than prices were for everything; they brought food from Russia and left all their money in Georgia. The Government could not gain even tenth part of the expenses, needed for keeping this conquest. In Trézel's opinion, "despite all these advantages the Georgians revealed very few eagerness for their new homeland". From the noblemen only Orbelians (Orbelianof), Tsitsianovs (Sitzianof) and Bagrations were on the side of Russia, others were feeling that instead of formation of a State of Georgia, Georgia was becoming a small province of Russia and their pride was hurt because of this humiliation. The Georgians support was so insignificant that the Russians could make only a battalion of 400-500 men, and in the lieutenant's opinion they even did not dare to arm them.

The Russian army, dislocated in Georgia consisted of 35 battalions of the linear infantry, three dragoon and five Don cossacks' regiments. Army personnel were 30,000 persons. These military units were dislocated in Imereti, Daghestan, Shirvan, all Georgia and Bambak Region. Several military units guarded Astara and Lenchoran Khan, that came under Russian protection. The garrisons, arranged on the

⁵⁵ Château de Vincennes, Service historique de l'Armée de Terre (Shat). Perse 1807-1857, 1M n°1673, Cracovie, non paginé, 11.08.1809, 4/52., fol. 1.

cite could carry into campaign only 17 battalions, 2 dragoon regiments and part of Cossacks – 12 thousand persons. These forces at that time were enough in battle against Persians, but it was necessary to take into consideration the expectations of the Gouvernements of Russia and Persia from this war. The Petersbourg court would never use great forces, but Fath-Ali shah, on the contrary, would send there all his forces. The Persians were still able to take Georgia away from Russia, if they guaranteed the Georgians to restore the old Government and better arranged internal administration, and the Georgians would restore with pleasure those weak relations, they had with the Persian Empire. According to the French officer, it would be good for the Russians to be well established in Georgia and to quietly take control of the Caucasus⁵⁶.

So, unlike the above-mentioned notes of the French consules in the Ottoman Empire and Napoleon's envoys in Persia, it is clear from the report of Lieutenant Trézel that he has a positive attitude towards the Russian Empire's policy, conducted in connection with Georgia and Caucasus in general.

The Letters of the Georgian Royal Princess to Napoléon

The Royal princes Alexander and Teimuraz gave their letters for Napoléon to the Generale Gardane, when the latter was returning in Europe. It is evident, that the Franco-Persian Treaty gave a certain hope to the Bagrations, who escaped to Persia, that Napoléon would support them. While comparing the Persian versions of the letters of the Royal Princes with their French translations, it is clear, that Amédée Jaubert translated these letters quite easily. In the French translation both Royal Princes, who escaped to Persia because of the persecutions of the Russians, are mentioned as refugees, and the main issue of their letters was to ask Napoléon to help them and return to them their kingdom, "unfairly conquered" by the Russians⁵⁷. The Royal Prince Teimuraz calls Napoléon "the distributor of crowns" and presents himself to him as the potential king of Georgia, and in the case of returning to "his former dominions", promises Napoléon to serve him with fidelity⁵⁸. But the political events in Europe developed faster than this information arrived to Persia, and the situation of the Georgian Royal Princes in Persia was so hard, that they did not take full notice of the failure of the political mission of General Gardane to Persia. Thus, it turned out, that the hope of Princes Alexandre and Teimuraz that Napoléon (and Christian Europe in general) would help the royal family of Bagrations to return their kingdom, was in vain. Prince Alexandre stayed devoted to his ideas but failed to

⁵⁶ Château de Vincennes, Service historique de l'Armée de Terre (Shat). Notice sur la Géorgie, 1M n°1486, Russie jusqu'en 1811, non paginé, 31.05.1809, doc. 13, fol. 32-76.

⁵⁷ AMFAE, CP/Perse, vol. 12, doc. 122, fol. 231r-231v.

⁵⁸ AMFAE, CP/Perse, vol. 11, doc. fol. 222v-222r.

reach his goal and died in extreme poverty in Tehran in 1844. As for Prince Teimuraz, it is evident, that he understood, that the aim of his escape to Persia – to drive away Russians from Georgia to restore the throne there, and also the hope that Napoléon would assist him in this, was an illusion. On October 16, 1810 Prince Teimuraz left for Russia and on January 12, 1811 settled in St. Petersburg. It is interesting, that Prince Teimuraz, the member of the descendant of the last King of Georgia, who was called “Timurat Khan, Georgian Senior, the chief of the artillery in the army of Abbas Mirza”⁵⁹, after his emigration from Persia to Russia became famous in Europe as a scholar. In 1831 he became a member-correspondent of the “Société Asiatique” of Paris, and in 1837 – Honorary Member of the Academy of Sciences of Russia. He died in St. Petersburg in 1846.

King Solomon II of Imereti (1789-1810), grandson of Erekle II, escaped from Russian captivity in 1810 and asked Fath-Ali Shah for help against Russians. Shah did not meet him but gave a small pension and advised to seek support from the Ottomans. Under these circumstances Solomon II wrote a letter to Napoléon. He had already sent a letter to the French Emperor but got no reply. The king decided to make another attempt. In the new letter, Solomon II called Napoléon “the arbiter of the universe” and asked to release him from the intolerable yoke of “the Emperor of Moscow” and take kingdom of Imereti under the Emperor’s protection⁶⁰. The letter was handed to French diplomat, George Outrey. King Solomon’s fight against the Russian occupation got no results. He emigrated to Turkey, and died far from his homeland, in Trabzon on 7 (19) February, aged 43.

Conclusion

In the first decade of the 19th century the interests of the greatest states – England, Russia and France – went beyond Europe, and crossed in Persia. The Franco-Persian Alliance Treaty, which in fact was the first military and political agreement between a European State and Persia at the beginning of the 19th century, attached to Georgia international importance. After concluding the Treaty of Tilsit, Georgia which was already included in the geopolitical space of the Russian Empire lost its importance for France but was still important for Persia. This has also been proven by the notes of the member of Sir Harford Jones Brydges mission, dated February 28, 1810. The source says that when the Russian Envoy Artillery Lieutenant-Colonel Baron Wrede reminded Mirza Bozorg that Persia broke the Treaty with France, the Vazier replied that “it was not Persia that broke it, but France as the essence of that treaty was the

⁵⁹ Joseph Michel Tancoigne, *Lettres sur la Perse et la Turquie d’Asie* (Paris : Nepveu - Libraire, 1819), II, 165-166.

⁶⁰ AMFAE, Russie, vol. 10: doc. 24, fol. 292r doc. 26, fol. 296r-296v.

restitution of Georgia for Iran. France either would not or could not perform her promise. We determined not to be trifled with any longer and formed an alliance with England”⁶¹. The issue of the restitution of Georgia to Persia was still actual during the negotiations carried out by Fath-Ali Shah’s Ambassador Mirza Abul Hassan Khan in 1809-1810 in London⁶².

After three decades, in 1839, Lefebvre de Becours, – the French historian, commented on this step of the Emperor of France as follows: “The Finkenstein Treaty was directed against England and Russia. The most precious, almost the only useful articles were about Georgia, the remainder was just the extra load (des charges). (...) While signing the Treaty of Tilsit with Russia, Napoléon did not take into consideration article 4 of the Finkenstein Treaty about returning Georgia to Persia”⁶³. Thus, the mission of General Gardane in Persia was doomed at the very moment of the conclusion of the Tilsit Treaty because of the double-cross policy of Napoléon. It turned out that at Tilsit, Napoléon’s political goals also no more coincided with Fath-Ali Shah’s plans and Persia and Georgia ended up as casualties of the Great Game between the European empires. While signing the Treaty with Persia in Finkenstein, Napoléon did not take into consideration that on the one hand Russia in the Caucasus and the Caspian Coast and on the other hand England in India would never give up their positions.

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⁶¹ Sir Harford Jones Brydges, *An Account of the Transactions of His Majesty’s Mission to the Court of Persia, in Years 1807* (London: Printed for James Bohn, 1834), I, xxiv-xxv.

⁶² Mirza Abul Hassan Khan, *A Persian at the Court of King George, 1809-10*, trans. & edit. Margaret Morris Cloake. Introduction Denis Wright (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1988), 60, 64, 69, 119, 164.

⁶³ AMFAE, MD/Perse, vol. 8, doc. 25, fol. 241v-243r.

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List of Illustrations:

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- A fragment of the Franco-Persian Draft Treaty, AMFAE, CP/Perse, vol. 9, doc. 94, April 1807
- Reception of Fath-Ali-Shah's Ambassador Mirza Mohammad Reza Khan Qazvini in the castle of Finkenstein by Napoleon on April 27, 1807. By Henri François Mulard
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- Prince Alexander (1770-1844). A fragment of Prince Alexander's Persian letter to Napoleon, AMFAE, CP/Perse, vol. 12, doc. 122, 6.05.1809

Summary

Georgia between France, Russia and Iran Seen by French Diplomats

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At the turn of the 19th century in order to include Persia in the plan of the Indian expedition Napoleon inserted the issue of Eastern Georgia which was annexed by Russia in 1801. According to the Franco-Persian Treaty (4.05.1807), Napoleon recognized Georgia as a legal property of Fath-Ali Shah (Art. 3), charged himself to force the Russians to leave the territories of Georgia (Art. 4). What information did the Emperor of France have about Georgia that he promised to Shah?

Some manuscripts dealing with this theme are kept in the Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France. Their authors were J.-F. Rousseau – the General Consul in Bassora (Basra), G. Olivier – French naturalist, P. Fourcade – the Consul in Synop, Joseph Rousseau – the Consul in Alepo (Aleppo), Napoleon's envoys the General Romieu and orientalist Jaubert. The mentioning of the former kingdom of Kartli and Kakheti as the "Georgia of Persia" reinforced in the mind of the French the idea that Georgia was a country which belonged to Persia, taken away by Russia by force. In some manuscripts the aspiration of Russia is noted to establish itself on the territories from the port of Trabizond to the port of Astarabad because of their advantageous military and commercial locations.

During all negotiations (1807-1809) the Tehran court demanded from the French Ambassador General Gardane the liberation of Georgia in favor of Persia. Unlike the mentioned diplomats, from the Aide-de-camp of Gardane, Lieutenant Trézel's report it is clear, that he has a positive attitude towards the Russian Empire's policy in Georgia and the Caucasus.

Keywords: Napoleon, Georgia, Persia, French Diplomats, archive material