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**JOSEPH DE MESTRE AND THE ORIGINS
OF THE RUSSIAN CONSERVATISM**

One of the most important preconditions for the spread of the European conservatism in Russia was the residence of some members of this political party in the empire. Russia was one of the favourite places for settlement of French immigrants as they join its military and civil service. One of the main representatives of European conservatism living in Russia since the beginning of the XIX century was Joseph de Maistre. This study examines the stay of Joseph de Maistre in the Eastern empire, his impact on the Russian society, and particularly, his influence in the foundation of the Russian conservative ideology.

His impact on the conservative ideology in Europe is so significant that even nowadays his personality and political philosophy arise interest among scholars. However, there are controversial opinions in historiography. R. Triomphe¹ defines him as "an ideologue of absolute power and mystical materialism". I. Berlin² as "cruel prophet of our time and precursor of fascism", J.-L. Darcel³ as "cosmopolitan searching for unity".

F. Verimiale⁴ studies the years in exile of Joseph de Maistre, J. Murray⁵ - his political philosophy. Another interesting research is that of C. Armenteros,

¹ Triomphe, R. *Joseph de Maistre. Etude sur la vie et sur la doctrine d'un materialiste mystique* (Geneve, 1968).

² Berlin, I. *Joseph de Maistre and the origins of Fascism* (The New York Review of Books, 1990).

³ Darcel, J.-L. La «conversion» de J. de Maistre (1789-1791): a propos de notes marginales attribuees a J. de Maistre. *Annales historiques de la Revolution francaise*, An. 50, 231 (1978); Darcel, J.-L. *J. de Maistre et la Revolution frangaise. L'information historique* (Paris, 1986).

⁴ Verimiale, F. "Joseph de Maistre émigré", *Société savoissienne d'histoire et arcléologie: Memoires et documents*, vol. 64 (Chambery, 1927), 63-229.

⁵ Murray, J. The Political Thought of Joseph De Maistre, *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (Jan., 1949), 63-86.

and R. Lebrun⁶, which is dedicated to the literary talent of de Maistre. D. Edwards studies concretely the influence of the French conservative over the Russian society⁷.

In 2001 released a collection of articles by experts from various universities, which examined **Joseph de Maistre's life, thought and influence**⁸.

As an important figure in the foundation of the Russian conservatism, the French conservative provokes interest among Russian researchers. One of the first to explore his personality is A. Pippin. He considers de Maistre as “a pillar of the European reaction and opponent of the Revolution”⁹. The pre-revolutionary Russian historiography examines the French conservative putting an accent on his great influence on the Russian conservatives. P. Matveev, in his article “De Maistre and his political doctrine”¹⁰, claims that the conservative publicists Ivan Aksakov and Mikhail Katkov are “familiar with the works of de Maistre and the originality and depth of his political thought”¹¹. V. Solovev¹² shares the same idea in his article „Slavophilism and its degradation”¹³.

During the Soviet period, de Maistre and his ideas are not popular and the soviet historians should consider him as the ideologist of “the Reaction.” According to Soviet scholars the works of the French conservative are used as an instrument against peace, democracy and socialism¹⁴. The Russian

⁶ Armenteros, C., Lebrun, R. *The New Enfant du Siècle: Joseph de Maistre as a Writer, in St Andrews Studies in French History and Culture*. 2010

⁷ Edwards, D. Count Joseph Marie de Maistre and Russian Educational Policy, 1803-1828: *Slavic Review*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Mar., 1977), 54-75.

⁸ *Joseph de Maistre's Life, Thought and Influence: Selected Studies*, ed. R.A. Lebrun (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press), 2001.

⁹ Пыпин, А. Советы графа Ж. де Местра. Современник. 1886, т. СХП (112). № 2. 544.

¹⁰ Матвеев, П. Ж. де Местр и его политическая доктрина. Русский вестник. 1889, т. 202. № 5.

¹¹ Ibid., 237-238.

¹² Соловьев, В. Славянофильство и его вырождение. Соч. в 2-х т. М., 1989, т. I.

¹³ Ibid., 482.

¹⁴ Шибунин, А. Европейская контрреволюция в первой половине XIX в., Л, 1925; Степанов, М. Ж де Местр в России. Литературное наследство, т.т. 29-30, М., 1937.

immigrant historiography from the same period gives more adequate assessment to de Maistre. In his article "The prophecies of the Russian revolution"¹⁵ P. Struve uses fragments of de Maistre's book "Four chapters on Russia" and defines the French conservative as a deep political analyst. The famous Russian religious philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev dedicates a special book to de Maistre¹⁶ in which characterizes him as profound, mystical-religious thinker.

After the fall of communism, in the Russian historical science appear a series of young scholars who study more profoundly his views and the influence of de Maistre. M. Degtyareva has several works devoted to Joseph de Maistre and his relationship with Russia and Russian¹⁷. N. Polyakova¹⁸ is another contemporary historian who makes theoretical parallels between the views of de Maistre and representatives of the Russian socio-political thought in the second half of the XIX century. G. Samuilov¹⁹ also discusses on the same issue and in his research reveals various aspects of the philosophy of the conservative, in order, to present the thinker in his theological, social, anthropological, political and historical aspects. M. Abduselimov²⁰ is also post-soviet historian who studies de Maistre and his stay in Russia, focusing on his strong influence on the formation of the Russian conservative thought.

¹⁵ Струве, П. Пророчества о русской революции. Дух и слово. Статьи о русской и западно-европейской литературе П.Б. Струве. Paris, 1981.

¹⁶ Бердяев, Н. Жозеф де Местр и масонство. – Новый мир, 1990. № 1, 224–228.

¹⁷ Дегтярева, М. Понятие суверенитета в политической философии Ж. де Местра, с. Полис. 2001, № 3; Дегтярева, М. Два кандидата за роль государственного идеолога: Ж. де Местра и Н. М. Карамзин. Исторические метаморфозы консерватизма. Пермь, 1998; Дегтярева, М. «Лучше быть якобинцом, чем фейяном»: Жозеф де Местр и Сергей Семёнович Уваров. – Вопросы философии. М., 2006. № 7.

¹⁸ Полякова, Н. Ж. де Местр и политическая философия русского консерватизма второй половины XIX века (М. Н. Катков, Ф. И. Тютчев). Дисс. ... к.ф.н. СПб., 1996.

¹⁹ Самуилов, Г. Философский и социально-политический консерватизм Жозефа де Местра. Дисс. ... к.ф.н. М., 2004.

²⁰ Абдуселимов, М. Социально-политические идеи Жозефа де Местра и консервативная мысль России XIX века диссертация ... кандидата политических наук : М., 2008; Абдуселимов, М. Жозеф де Местр и судьбы русского консерватизма. Вестник Московского университета. Серия 12. Политические науки, 2007, № 3.

Joseph de Maistre was born on 1 April 1753 in Chambéry, Savoy, then part of the Kingdom of Sardinia, in a French aristocratic family. His father was chairman of the Senate of Savoy. Following family tradition, in 1774, Joseph de Maistre graduated in the University of Turin, where he studied law. In the same year he became a member of the Masonic Lodge in Chambéry and remained there until 1790, reaching the level of "great orator".

In 1787, following his father's path, he became a senator. The turning point in his life became the French Revolution. At first, the conservative has some illusions as significant part of the aristocratic intelligentsia in France and Europe did, about the creative beginning of the revolution, but in the first months of its distribution in France, he became its consistent, absolute and ultimate opponent.

In November 1792, a month after French troops entering Savoy, Joseph de Maistre left his homeland and joined the French political immigration in Europe. He went to Lausanne as a diplomatic representative of the Sardinian king and this was the beginning of his political career. There, Joseph de Maistre, began also his literary and philosophical career and in 1796 created his most popular work "Reflections on France." This book is a kind of "Bible" not only to the French political immigration, but to the forces that are fighting against the Revolution, ie the European Conservatives.

From 1802 to 1817 Joseph de Maistre was ambassador of Kingdom of Sardinia in Russia and this was the best time for his political messages to the world through his philosophy, protecting the old regime. There Joseph de Maistre obtained the reputation of a modern thinker, rehabilitation and reopening old virtues of pre-revolutionary course in French and European history. He used Reason and Public Needs as arguments for his cause, combined with Faith, based on spirituality, rather than on superstition.

The Sardinian conservative opposed the philosophy of the Enlightenment - not unconditionally and comprehensively, but only in that part that provoked excesses and terror during the revolutionary years. He criticized, on purpose, those of its ideas that lie in the intellectual and ideological premises of the revolution in 1789. Joseph de Maistre said: "We do not want counterrevolution but the opposite of the revolution"²¹ that position, according to Robert Nisbet, is main principle to all conservatives.

²¹ Nisbet, R. *Conservatism: Dream and Reality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 20.

Because of his moderation and ability to justify convincingly the idea of social inequality, Joseph de Maistre is considered, by the researches, to be one of the most important founders of the ideology of the European Reactionary wave of triumphant conservatism and legitimism, till 1848. De Maistre did not attack the "Reason" as he is often accused, but the practical and political speculations carried out on its behalf.

Till the end of his life de Maistre remained a political writer – a philosopher, devotee of the "Holy Alliance" created and directed against the revolutionary changes in Europe and the world. Although he did not have the literary finesse of Chateaubriand, Joseph de Maistre succeeded to justify the necessity conservatism and clerical-monarchist principle to be leading practices in government.

The political philosophy of Joseph de Maistre

As the D. Solovyov writes in the preface to the Russian edition of ““The Saint Petersburg Dialogues”²²:”The greatest benefit of Joseph de Maistre is that he was one of the first, who with the power of his literary talent manage to reveal the fatal for humanity, false ideals of liberty, equality, and the perverted conception of justice”²³. The words of another Russian – V. Solovyov characterize the philosophy of the French conservative: “...he does not believe that there will be a principle and final confrontation and rupture between faith and knowledge, but he predicts that in the future there will be a new grand synthesis of religion, philosophy and positive science in a single system”²⁴. The appeal of the French conservative for interdisciplinarity and combination of science and faith in search of truth, reveals him as an intelligent and modern man. Thus, his philosophy cannot fit into the typical characterization of a revisionist one, proposing nothing new, simply trying to restore the Past.

One of the most important aspects, of the de Maistre’s political philosophy, is sovereignty. This is not surprising: after all, the French legal and political thought is one of the most ardent advocates of the conception of

²² Местр, Ж. де. Петербургские письма. СПб, 1995.

²³ Ibid.,17-18.

²⁴ Ibid., 17.

sovereignty and the revolution of 1789 created a precedent by challenging the authority of the highest state authority. Becoming convinced opponent of the revolution, de Maistre was forced to seek arguments in defense of the prerogatives of the king.

In order to legitimize the sovereignty of monarchy, the French conservative compared it with the other types of government and criticized the doctrine for sovereignty of the people. He first addressed this issue in "Reflections on France" (1796), a book that caused great furor. Its success was mainly determined by its style - a combination of mysticism and rationalism, secular wisdom and religious passion.

The main argument of Joseph de Maistre against sovereignty of the people was historical²⁵. Using historical arguments and the Wisdom of the Past, the philosopher reached the conclusion that sovereignty of the people is nothing more than an impractical abstraction. Joseph de Maistre described new republican France as follows: "The scarcity of human creations corresponded to the inherent imperfections of their creator"²⁶.

According to the conservative, the people, in general, is deprived of the opportunity to rule - both in republic, and in monarchy, the people inevitably finds itself in the position of a subject. The French conservative thought that the large territory of his fatherland was the main reason the republican government could not work. The author of "Reflections on France" argued that republic could only exist in small countries or cities, as it was the case in Ancient Greece. Only in such occasion, actually, everyone could participate in government because the small number of population allows that. De Maistre was adamant that "The words Large Republic are mutually exclusive as the words square circle"²⁷.

In his book "The Pope" the French conservative gave answer to the question, whether the king was created in the name of the people or the people was created for the monarch: "The both proposals are incorrect, if considered separately, and are correct when taken together. The people is created for the ruler and the ruler is designed for the people, and both are created for the sovereignty to exists. The big spring, located in the clock is not set because of

²⁵ Местр, Ж. дьо. Размишления за Франция. С., 1996, 37-46.

²⁶ Ibid., 10.

²⁷ Ibid., 42.

the pendulum and it is not design because of the big spring, but they are designed together to show time"²⁸. That is the reason why he believed that the connection between the ruler and people is initial and fundamental and monarchy is the natural and, in the same time, the best form of government.

Thus, for de Maistre, sovereignty occurs as a result of the combined efforts of the monarch and his subjects. In this case there is no doubt that sovereignty is not limited to a specific bearer and does not belong to any of the forces involved in its administration as a result of their common activities, as the time of the clock is the result of coordinating the work of different parts of its mechanism.

The author of "Reflections on France" claimed that the king is personified embodiment of the idea of homeland for his subjects and thus he becomes subject of political idealization. The devotion to the dynasty matches with the devotion of the people to its historic past. Therefore, it is the loyalty to the throne, that de Maistre regarded as the highest expression of patriotic sentiments and due to the monarchy a nation defines itself as a historical and political unity. De Maistre gave the following example: "Take away the queen bee of the hive and you will have as many bees as you want, but not the beehive"²⁹.

For the French conservative monarchy is inextricably connected to the nation. That's why he linked the legitimacy of the monarch power with its hereditary character and national origin. Perfect monarchy should not be based on usurpation, because foreign power "...brings to the people not order and peace but tyranny and slavery and the service to the foreign ruler is the greatest misfortune of the people"³⁰. Therefore, the most sacred and immutable national right, that de Maistre defied, is the election of a new king in a case of a dynasty termination. The duty of the people to the kingship is associated with obedience and monarchy, in turn, is related to the subjects through a series of commitments. Such form of government is "the best form of sovereignty practice" that can provide the greatest benefit to the greatest number of people on the largest territory, for the longest time - due to a developed system of

²⁸ Maistre, J. de. *The Pope: Considered in His Relations with the Church, Temporal Sovereignities, Separated Churches and the Cause of Civilization* (1817, English translation 1850), 143.

²⁹ Цит. по Дегтярева, М, Понятие суверенитета в политической философии Ж. де Местра. Полис, 2001, N 3, 06.06.2010.

³⁰ Ibid.

social differentiation, and the mutual responsibility and continuity of the representatives of the royal family.

At the same time, the monarchy must not only protect the state from external problems, but to keep it from its own arbitrary and not allow its power to become a tyranny. This requires a system of containment and control of the monarchy by itself. Except for the responsibility before God, the ruler is obliged to lead his country according to principles, which have proved their correctness outstanding the test of time. So the king must comply with the laws and, furthermore, there is an independent judiciary – the magistrates. For the sake of separation of the judiciary between the monarch and the people, the king gives legal advisory functions to the people – the Estates General in France. The estates representation also can be considered as a social counterbalance to the monarch. De Maistre also considered, in the category of “natural” regulatory tools to the power of the king, Tradition and public opinion.

Finally, an important element, mitigating the political power of the king, is the sacred nature of laws and regulations, and the participation of the clergy in government. According to the author of "Reflections on France", the participation of the clergy in the government is not really political, but rather is administrative which is traditionally French.

De Maistre said: "I do not believe that other European monarchy is using, for the good of the state, such a large number of senior clerics in secular government"³¹. Due to that, France became a peculiar theocracy, which according to him, allowed it to last longer. The conservative was proud that his country was "... the Head of the religious system and its king is called with reason “too Christian”³². The mission of France, according to him, was to exercise in Europe "real and undeniable power", ie govern by and in the name of God. Therefore, the sin of revolutionaries was unforgivable - they did destroy not only the human but also the divine order.

Joseph de Maistre considered that the balance in government, that characterized pre-revolutionary France, was a system of mutual deterrence of the monarchy and the nation which guaranteed the political status quo of the state. He was convinced that till the French Revolution his fellow-countrymen were happy governed by unwritten constitution, which was "a mixture of

³¹ *Местр, Ж. дьо*. Размишления за Франция. С., 1996, 69.

³² *Ibid.*,17.

freedom and authority of the law...”³³. The conservative thought that during this period "all influences were well balanced and everyone was in his right place"³⁴. A good balance of power, he said, was the main factor which helped his country to become a leading European and global power.

Over time, the views of de Maistre, about sovereignty, evolved in the direction of increasing religious authority. He became a supporter of the idea of papocaesarism. He claimed that the pope should be the supreme arbiter of all lords, and that his assessment must be final. Joseph de Maistre developed these ideas after leaving Russia and they are the main difference between him and Russian conservatives. For the Russians the principle of Caesaropapism was basic and the Church was subject to secular authority and was its assistant. This was the practice in the Orthodox world and this was the main credo in the construction of its state ideology in Eastern Roman Empire. In Western Europe the thing happened differently. After the fall of the Western Roman empire in 476, the pope remained the only authority and the western rulers received their power from him and because of this the pope became the greatest authority among Catholics. These features clearly reflected in political philosophy in the West and the East.

Joseph de Maistre in Russia

Joseph de Maistre Settled in St. Petersburg in early 1803 as an ambassador of Sardinian king, remained in the Empire until 1817 and there created his main literary works. Even before arriving in the Russian capital, he was famous around Europe for his work "Reflections on France" dedicated to the French Revolution. In this book he showed his interpretation of revolutionary events, named the revolution "satanic", while admitting that there werw some objective reasons that led to it. According to the French conservative, the revolution was God's punishment for violating the earthly order³⁵. The reputation of Joseph de Maistre preceded his arrival in the Russian capital. After his establishment in St. Petersburg the conservative became

³³ Ibid., 69.

³⁴ Ibid., 70.

³⁵ Ibid., 17-28.

famous and wanted person because of his political beliefs, his religiosity and celebrity. Ambassadors of Austria and England welcomed him as an ally against Napoleon. Because of his abilities and fervent Catholicism, he was well received in all circles and salons of high society in Russia, who sympathized the Roman Church. For these reasons, de Maistre established a very good relationship with the Jesuits. At that time, their influence in the empire was significant, but because of his verbal and oratorical talent the thinker was also well received among the Russian nobility who had anti-napoleon positions.

Being in Russia, the French conservative not only developed his global-conservative doctrine, not only promoted his ideas of unity of all Christian monarchies in universal brotherhood and even universal republic under the rule and direction of the highest church authority, ie Pope, but also actively participated in the internal politics of empire. In 1810-1811, he sent to the Minister of Education A.K. Razumovski numerous notes in which exposed his thoughts on the internal structure of the state and proposals for changes in the education system. This field of interest – education was the reason why he became acquainted with count Sergei Uvarov – the founder of the famous Russian conservative triad – orthodoxy-autocracy-nationality. They maintained communication during the period 1811 – 1814. The problem of de Maistre's influence on the Russian educational system and the exchange of ideas between the two conservatives are closely examined by D. Edwards³⁶ and M. Degtyareva³⁷.

D. Edwards says: "Uvarov and de Maistre struggled against the new trends entering the Russian society and politics and though protecting various methods of action, they often reach the same conclusions"³⁸. According to the same researcher, there is a mutual influence which was reflected in Uvarov's triad. Moreover, D. Edwards claims, the Sardinian conservative had influence on the educational policy of Russia and following his advices the education in the Eastern Empire was religiously oriented.

³⁶ Edwards , D. Count Joseph Marie de Maistre and Russian Educational Policy, 1803-1828. *Slavic Review*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Mar., 1977).

³⁷ Дегтярева, М. «Лучше быть якобинцом, чем фейяном»: Жозеф де Местр и Сергей Семёнович Уваров. – Вопросы философии, 2006, № 7.

³⁸ Edwards , D. Count Joseph Marie de Maistre and Russian Educational Policy, 1803-1828. *Slavic Review*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Mar., 1977), 60.

The educational policy of the empire was the main topic of the correspondence between the two conservatives, but in their letters, they also exchanged political ideas. The concrete reason for their dialogue was the work of Sergei Uvarov "Asian Academy Project", on which de Maistre wrote a review. But in their correspondence they discussed a much broader range of issues. In his "Project", the President of the Russian Academy of Sciences called for serious scientific research of the East, which would improve contacts with this region and would strengthen Russia's geopolitical interests: "Russia, already has a close relationship with Turkey, China, Persia and Georgia can not only help there <...> for general enlightenment, but also fulfill its greatest interests; never, until now, the public interest is not so well-matched with the great moral purpose of civilization"³⁹.

The idea, which made a strong positive impression on the Sardinian ambassador, was the conservative system of values, professed by the Russian aristocrat, and especially the fact that Uvarov shared the same belief with him about religion - Christianity is essential in solving public affairs.

In the first letter of de Maistre to the Russian scientist, there was both praise and disagreement which revealed two types of conservative ideology. In the positive part of the letter the author of "Reflections on France" expressed his admiration for the young Russian author because of his history interpretation, based on conservative ideology. De Maistre liked Uvarov's anti-progressive perception of history, as a world decadence and desertion from the state of primordial perfection - ideas perfectly matching with his own, which he later displayed in "St. Petersburg Dialogues". Sensing the conservative orientation of young Russian scientist, the author of "Reflections on France" predicted him great political future, saying that his work "gives many and promises to give even more"⁴⁰.

The one thing that de Maistre did not agree with was Uvarov's idea of religious tolerance. The fears of the French conservative were related with the Protestants as a Catholic devotee. The problem was that the Russian nobleman, in the beginning, was seized by the zeitgeist and ideas of Russian society and the Russian Emperor Alexander I for creation of United Christian empire It should include the three Christian emperors and to be built in the spirit of

³⁹ Цит по: *Дегтярева, М.* «Лучше быть якобинцом, чем фейяном»: Жозеф де Местр и Сергей Семёнович Уваров. – Вопросы философии, 2006, № 7. 106.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 107.

tolerance between the various Christian movements. This thing seemed unacceptable to the French conservative, to whom the pope was the greatest authority and therefore Catholicism is the true Christianity.

After the 20-ies of the XIX century, it became clear that Christian unity would not be achieved and Uvarov gradually changed his ideas. As a result he created a new conservative ideology built on the three principles of Russian conservatism: Orthodoxy, autocracy, nationality. The Russian politician became devoted opponent of religious tolerance, and the most important element in his new conservative ideology was Christianity as it is in the de Maistre's philosophy. It is true, that when the Sardinian Ambassador talked about Christianity it was Catholicism and the Russian -Orthodoxy, but they both believed in the supremacy of Christianity as a leading state principle. The differences between the two came out from their state tradition – papocaesarism in the West and in the East - caesaropapism. The Conservative idea was the same, but it depended on the place where it developed and because of the local specificities appeared some features but they are motivated by the principle which is basic for conservatism – the Tradition.

Although Joseph de Maistre was highly educated and had long life and political experience, he was confident supporter of the feudal system. He convincingly argued that the empire could not exist without slavery, the only support for the monarchy was aristocracy and despite all its weaknesses, it was irreplaceable. The conservative foresaw great collapse for Russia if 36 million peasants, or as he called them – slaves, were freed. The ambassador of Kingdom Sardinia opposed even the release of the peasants from landlords, fearing the bankrupt of the last ones⁴¹.

The French conservative examined literature and science, in general, as harmful and even advised not to thought in schools history, geography and even the economy. The Sardinian diplomat also advised that the teachers should be only Russians and in no case foreigners, especially Germans and Protestants. In the same time he insisted for the protection of the Catholic Church and preached cohesion of the Russian Orthodoxy with Catholicism⁴².

The political, social and economic advices of Joseph de Maistre and his concern about Russia's internal affairs were sincere. He recognized the Eastern

⁴¹ *Местр, Ж. де.* Сочинения. Четыре неизданные главы о России. СПб., 37-44.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 101-102.

empire as the last force and stronghold which could oppose the revolution, and therefore tried every way to help it and keep its social and political order. Russian conservatives considered the attempts of the Sardinian Ambassador to preserve the system and help them as a great honor. Joseph de Maistre was very popular in their community and well-received among them. He was well-known with the leaders of the Russian movement - Alexander Shishkov and Nikolai Karamzin and at the same time was very close to Alexander I.

Joseph de Maistre and the Russian conservative project

In the begging, Joseph de Maistre had the status of an official ambassador of a king without a kingdom, and in that capacity fought for diplomatic and financial support for Sardinia. Due to his talent and oratorical skills, he became a prominent figure in the political life of Petersburg. So gradually, the Sardinian conservative became one of the most trusted men of Alexander I and the reasons for this rise were not fully understood even today. According to some of the most respected researchers of the problem – R. Triomphe⁴³ and M. Stepanov⁴⁴, the Emperor wanted to use the catholic for "pacification" of Poland before the war of 1812. At the request of the emperor de Maistre prepared a manifesto proclaiming the Polish Kingdom, but it too late for that and in June 26, 1812 Warsaw Sejm declared the restoration of Poland.

Alexander I had such confidence in the Sardinian ambassador, that he listened to his advice on the coming war with Napoleon. The popularity of the author of "Reflections on France" in St. Petersburg salons, his literary glory, knowledge and taste were very important for the well-educated Emperor. According to Alexander Strudza, contemporary and also a man with strong positions in the Russian royal court, "De Maistre is unquestionably the most

⁴³ Triomphe. R. *Joseph de Maistre, étude sur la vie et sur la doctrine d'un matérialiste mystique* (Geneva, 1968).

⁴⁴ Степанов, М. [Шебунин А.Н.], Вермель, Ф. Жозеф де Местр в России. Литературное наследство. Русская культура и Франция, т. XXIX-XXX. М., 1937.

powerful person in Petersburg during the reign of Alexander I⁴⁵. The confidence of the Russian tsar to the French conservative was so extensive that his project for Pozharski and Minin⁴⁶ monument in Moscow was chosen among the rest and approved.

With the start of the Napoleonic wars and imminent threat of revolution, in Russia occurred a need for the development of conservative ideology to meet the revolutionary challenge. Such task was given to de Maistre by prince Alexei Golitsyn and in response, he created a work came to be known by the name "Four chapters on Russia"⁴⁷, in which he exposed his conservative project for the Eastern Empire. At the same time his unwitting competitor became the Russian historian Nikolay Karamzin, who received the same task from Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna. As a result, he wrote, in February 1811, "Memoir on Ancient and Modern Russia". It was not very likely that Joseph de Maistre had any idea of Karamzin's project, because it remained a secret, and almost no one knew of its existence. The "Memoir" of Karamzin was accidentally discovered in 1836 and only then it gained publicity.

The circumstances of the king's acquaintance with the work of Karamzin were not well known, but his reaction was not positive and, as a result, the work was transmitted to oblivion. Also it is known that Karamzin had enjoyed the favor of the king till the royal visit to Tver in March 1811, where after a friendly dinner there was a sudden change in the behavior of Alexander I and cold goodbye. The tsar changed his attitude towards the historian just about after the Napoleonic Wars.

So both projects were presented to Aleksander I within one year. The minuses in the work of de Maistre were his religion and foreign origin. However, the author of "Reflections on France" won the confidence of the Emperor and, so in February 1812 de Maistre became private secretary to the Russian ruler, and his duties even include editing of secret letters.

⁴⁵ Triomphe. R. *Joseph de Maistre, étude sur la vie et sur la doctrine d'un matérialiste mystique...*, 305.

⁴⁶ Kuzma Minin and Dmitry Pozharski are liberators of Moscow from Polish domination in 1612.

⁴⁷ *Местр, Ж. де. Сочинения. СПб., 2007.*

“Four chapters on Russia” and “Memoir on Ancient and Modern Russia” are, on one hand, works similar in content and meaning, but on the other hand, between them there are certain differences. The biggest matches, in the concept of the two contenders for the role of government ideologues, are the anti-liberal criticism and the opposition of conservative concreteness to the liberal abstractedness. Despite logic, de Maistre found himself in a better position than Karamzin. The Russian conservative was a sincere patriot and as major trend in Russian history, he considered the development and strengthening of autocratic rule. On the other hand, de Maistre was not an apologist of the Russian political tradition which was a serious problem for the fulfillment of his task. Another serious problem was that he had to use against the liberal opponents the Russian tradition, but he did not admire it. Therefore, the only possibility for the author of "Reflections on France" remained the possibility to give a theoretical character to his work and to introduce the traditional development, in general, as the highest political value. Fulfilling this task with much skill and finesse, he managed to win the sympathy of the Russian Emperor, maybe exactly because he is a foreigner.

In both works the main idea was the theory of the originality of Russian culture and its diversity from the European. This was considered as a positive fact and the affirmation of the exclusive originality of Russia was admired by both authors. Karamzin and de Maistre were against the transfer of western forms of government to Russian land, although Karamzin did not deny there are some positive moments in the western governmental practices.

The opinion of Karamzin and de Maistre for Emperor Peter I was also close. The Sardinian conservative called Peter "the killer of his own nation" and added: "stealing their customs, manners, character and religion, he gave Russia to foreign charlatans and turn it into a toy of endless changes"⁴⁸. According to Karamzin: "Peter does not want to understand the truth, that the spirit of a nation is its moral power ... with the eradication, by force, of the ancient habits and ideas, presenting them as ridiculous and stupid and the glorification of the foreign ones, the ruler humiliates Russia and Russians in their hearts ..."⁴⁹. It should be mentioned in their comments on the reformist Emperor there is a

⁴⁸ *Местр, Ж. де.* Петербургские письма. СПб., 1995, 179.

⁴⁹ *Карамзин, Н.* Записка о древней и новой России в ее политическом и гражданском отношениях. М., 1991, 18.

tendency the Ambassador of Kingdom Sardinia to have more radical position than his Russian colleague.

If for Karamzin Peter's epoch was a time of political confusion, for de Maistre Peter's rule was undermining of the Russian national tradition. The main accusations of the French conservative to the reformist tsar were based on his negative policy toward the church and religion. According to de Maistre the main reason for his policy was the desire to impose Enlightenment ideas and atheism.

The ambassador of Kingdom of Sardinia considered that there are two historical ways for overcoming the wickedness of the human will - slavery and religion. Comparing Catholic and Orthodox Christianity, de Maistre reached to the conclusion that in Russia, where the clergy had neither influence nor power, the release of peasantry would be a disaster. As an additional argument supporting his theory, he pointed out the geographical specificity of the Russian Empire and the peculiarities of the national character. Joseph de Maistre, as a whole, sympathized the Russian national character, but nevertheless mentions the lack of moderation in the mores of the imperial nation. That is why, according to him, the attempt to apply European type of freedom on Russian soil would inevitably result in rebellion and turmoil.

Joseph de Maistre and Nikolay Karamzin were supporters of the evolutionary path of human development and therefore they thought that solving social problems and implementation of social reform had to happen little by little. The Sardinian conservative believed that the feudal system would transform itself, by itself, over time. He said: "If liberation should happen in Russia, it should happen naturally"⁵⁰.

Analyzing the political situation in Russia, de Maistre reaches the conclusion that the state needed isolation as main principle in international state policy, in order, to avoid the spreading of the European revolutionary wave. Karamzin also claimed that "the wisdom of Moscow rulers lies in their deviation from any involvement in European affairs, which are much more beneficial to selfish monarchs than useful for the country"⁵¹.

⁵⁰ *Местр, Ж. де. Сочинения. СПб., 2007, 42.*

⁵¹ *Карамзин, Н. Записка о древней и новой России в ее политическом и гражданском отношениях. М., 1991, 12.*

The softer position of Karamzin, on need of external insulation, reflected the cosmopolitan nature of the Russian aristocracy. One of the most important issues for the Russian conservatives was the changes – which was the way and how the new should result from the old. On the other hand, the ideas of de Maistre in "Four four chapters on Russia" and in "St. Petersburg dialogues", where he urged the Russians to return to their traditional values, were much more radical. He was one of the first in Russia, who not only offered a popular conservatism, but also foreign policy isolation as norm of state behavior and political strategy.

The Russian and French conservatives had discrepancies, discussing the nature of monarch power and its social support. While Karamzin considered all Russian people as the foundation of the monarchy and the state, de Maistre accepted aristocracy as the only base of royal power. As a result, the credo of the Russian conservatism became the notorious triad of Sergey Uvarov - Orthodoxy - autocracy – nationality and these three elements were considered as one inseparable whole. In conclusion, it could be said, that the conservative positions of Joseph de Maistre were more extreme and radical than those of Nikolay Karamzin, which could be explained with his greater political experience.

Conclusion

The influence of Joseph de Maistre in the construction of Russian conservative ideology was significant and the future generations rely on his authority and wisdom in their crusade against the Revolution and its ideas. As a result, Russia gradually became a country with very strong conservative tradition. In his book "Four chapters on Russia" the French conservative defines several principles which become bases on the Russian conservative ideology:

- Traditional way of state development is the highest political value.
- Transfer to Russian soil of western forms of government is wrong.
- Russia needs isolation as External Affairs policy to avoid the spread of European revolutionary wave.

- Monarchy is the best form of government because it is God sent.
- Religion and the Church should be the foundation on which the empire should be build.
- Negative approach to Peter I - because of his reforms and negative policy toward the church and religion.

This way the conservative European idea is transferred to Russia, and it is established and developed by some of the brightest minds in the Empire during the second half of the XIX, early XX century - Nicholas Danilevski, Konstantin Leontiev, Ivan Aksakov, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Mikhail Katkov, Konstantin Pobedonostsev, Lev Tikhomirov, Nikolai Berdyaev.

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