



Layered Liberalism

The Golitsyn Legation in the Dutch Republic (1770-1782)

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This article discusses how Prince Dmitrii Golitsyn's diplomatic mission in the Dutch Republic (1770-1782) led him to develop liberal views on different levels: in his intellectual work and correspondence, in his diplomatic service, and in his scientific and academic views. The article starts out from the contrasting contexts he found himself in: his position as a thoroughly Europeanised (and partially European-raised) diplomat working to defend the interests of the Russian Empire. Next, the article then examines how constrained Golitsyn actually was by state service, and how the Dutch environment he lived and worked in gradually liberated him from these restrictions. Yet did this contrast of contexts truly liberate him, or compel him to shift his focus from diplomacy to science over the years? In the article, I explore the different domains in which Golitsyn worked by looking at two cases in which Golitsyn made his mark and which resonated in European politics and science: his Dutch-oriented take on negotiating the League of Armed Neutrality and his later scientific work and defense of the physiocrats. In both cases, it appeared that Golitsyn's diplomatic service in The Hague and his position in Dutch society, where he chose to remain even after he had left Russian service, time and again turned out to be decisive factors for the development of his ideas and actions.

Dit artikel onderzoekt hoe prins Dmitrii Golitsyn tijdens zijn diplomatieke missie in de Nederlandse Republiek (1770-1782) liberale standpunten ontwikkelde in zijn intellectuele activiteiten en correspondentie, zijn diplomatieke praktijk, zijn wetenschappelijk en academisch werk. Een belangrijk vertrekpunt van dit artikel is het grote contrast tussen de verschillende contexten waarin Golitsyn moest werken. Enerzijds was hij een sterk verwesterde diplomaat, deels opgegroeid in West-Europa. Anderzijds moest hij zonder uitzondering de belangen van het Russische keizerrijk verdedigen, ook in de Nederlandse Republiek. Het artikel onderzoekt in welke mate dit officieel kader Golitsyn begrensde en hoe hij zich tijdens zijn verblijf in Den Haag geleidelijk aan losmaakte van het officiële keurslijf,

waarna hij zich uitsluitend nog op de wetenschap toelegde. De verschillende domeinen waarin Golitsyn actief was, worden verkend aan de hand van twee casestudy's die weerklank vonden in de Europese politiek en wetenschap: zijn pro-Nederlandse houding bij het onderhandelen van het Verbond van Gewapende Neutraliteit (1780-1783), en zijn latere wetenschappelijk werk en apologie van de fysiocraten. In beide gevallen bleken zijn diplomatieke werk in Den Haag en zijn positie in de Nederlandse maatschappij, waar hij bleef wonen nadat hij de diplomatieke dienst had verlaten, een bepalende factor in de ontwikkeling van zijn standpunten. Het veelzijdige liberalisme van Golitsyn, dat zich manifesteerde op politiek, wetenschappelijk en cultureel niveau, toont tot slot aan hoe belangrijk de bijdrage van buitenlandse diplomaten aan de Nederlandse politiek en maatschappij kon zijn, zeker tijdens de turbulente jaren tachtig van de achttiende eeuw.

Introduction¹

During a visit to Saint Petersburg State University on 25 May 2002, Vladimir Putin presented President George Bush with copies of the first known documents that marked the start of Russian-American diplomatic correspondence after the American independence.² One of them, dated October 1780, is a letter of John Adams to the Russian Ambassador in The Hague, Dmitrii Alekseevich Golitsyn (1734-1803). Highly educated and an advocate of the abolition of serfdom, Golitsyn came to be known as one of Russia's first liberals. He was ill at ease with Russian society; for more than thirty years, Golitsyn lived and worked in the Dutch Republic. He was a defender of the physiocrats, he acquired books and paintings for Catherine the Great and he was a friend of the French philosopher Denis Diderot. As a diplomat in The Hague, Golitsyn played a decisive role in the League of Armed Neutrality. As a scientist, he experimented with electricity and studied mineralogy.

Golitsyn's liberal views on serfdom and his personal assessment of the French Revolution were the result of the contrasting contexts he found himself in: his position as a thoroughly Europeanised and partially European-raised diplomat working in Russian state service. By looking at the case of Golitsyn, this article aims to study the ideas of Russia's first liberal on two levels: first of all, how working as a Russian diplomat in a West European environment affected his perception of politics and society and secondly, how the development of his ideas shifted between diplomatic, cultural and scientific settings.

1 I would like to thank Matthijs Lok (UvA), Tom Verschaffel (KU Leuven) and Kaat Wils (KU Leuven) for their feedback during the writing process of this article.

2 <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/43109> (accessed 2 May 2017).

Using the word ‘liberalism’ for the views of a diplomat whose career spanned both pre- and post-revolutionary Europe can be a bit of a semantic puzzle. As Steven Vincent points out, liberal ideas far predated the political liberalism that was first coined in the early nineteenth century writings of Benjamin Constant and his contemporaries.³ Over time, new layers of liberalism emerged: not only a focus on individual rights or free markets, but also on interdependence, tolerance and diversity.⁴ Michael Freeden describes how the interplay of these temporal and spatial layers of liberalism leads to completely different interpretations then and now, linking it to Koselleck’s views on the historical development of socio-political concepts and their evolution from concrete to more abstract referents.⁵

The writings of Locke, Mill and Montesquieu all contributed to a liberal narrative that was only to be institutionalised after the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, already in the eighteenth century this early liberal discourse resonated well into Eastern Europe, as described in Leontovitsch’s *History of Liberalism in Russia*.⁶ The focus of this monograph lies primarily with an assessment of how since Catherine the Great consecutive tsars harboured liberal ideas, translated them into government policies and eventually abandoned them. Leontovitsch distinguishes three basic characteristics of eighteenth century liberalism in Russia: 1. the influence of the philosophes, 2. economic liberalism (freedom of economic activity and the liberation of private initiative), 3. reforms linked to civil rights (constitutionalism, freedom of press) and individual freedom (abolition of serfdom).⁷ As will be discussed in this article, Golitsyn took up a crucial, if not constitutive, role in

3 Kenneth Steven Vincent dates the emergence of Constant’s ‘French’ liberalism as early 1795-1797. See Kenneth Steven Vincent, *Benjamin Constant and the Birth of French Liberalism* (New York 2011) 39.

4 For the ‘traditional’ study of liberalism, see Leonard Hobhouse and Isaiah Berlin’s essays; with Michael Freeden and Edmund Fawcett as more recent authoritative voices in the debate on liberal ideology. Leonard Trelawny Hobhouse, *Liberalism* (London 1911); Isaiah Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford 1969); Michael Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (London 1996); Edmund Fawcett, *Liberalism: The Life of an Idea* (Princeton 2014).

5 Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory*, 120.

6 Apart from Leontovitsch and despite Walicki’s claims that the prerevolutionary liberal tradition in Russia was actually much

stronger than generally acknowledged, few studies focus on the emergence of early liberalism in the Russian Empire. See Andrzej Walicki, *Legal Philosophies of Russian Liberalism* (Notre Dame 1992); Viktor Leontovitsch, *The History of Liberalism in Russia* (Pittsburgh 2012) 19-25. Apart from Walicki and Leontovitsch, the majority of studies focus on the nineteenth century, see e.g. Gary Hamburg, *Boris Chicherin and Early Russian Liberalism, 1828-1866* (Stanford 1992); Anton A. Fedyashin, *Liberals under Autocracy: Modernization and Civil Society in Russia, 1866-1904* (Madison 2012); Dmitriy Shlapentokh, *The French Revolution in Russian Intellectual Life, 1865-1905* (London 1996).

7 Leontovitsch, *The History of Liberalism in Russia* 19-25.

the implementation of all three characteristics through his contacts with the philosophes and physiocrats, his free trade diplomacy that led to the League of Armed Neutrality and his innovative abolitionist views. What sets Golitsyn apart from his contemporaries however is that after 1789, he did not abandon his views. He continued to defend his principles and never returned to Russia.

This article contributes to the history of early liberal thought in and outside Russia, by assessing not only the Russian but also the western correspondence of Dmitrii Golitsyn, with a specific focus on the role of his political, cultural and scientific diplomacy in Western Europe. Studies of Golitsyn's life and work written by, among others, Georges Dulac and Grant Tsvetava so far mainly analysed the extensive correspondence with his relative Aleksandr Mikhailovich Golitsyn, preserved in the Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts (RGADA) in Moscow.⁸ Yet Golitsyn's correspondence with European intellectuals after 1768 preserved in Dutch and Belgian archives offers valuable new insights. His letters illustrate how his ideas and actions were influenced by the Dutch setting and several historical events, most notably the American independence, the establishment of the League of Armed Neutrality and the French Revolution.⁹ One of the questions to be answered is how constrained Golitsyn actually was by his Russian state service, and whether the Dutch environment he lived and worked in for over thirty years gradually liberated him from these restrictions. I will explore these questions by looking at two cases in which Golitsyn eventually took a decisive stance: his personal, Dutch-oriented take on negotiating the League of Armed Neutrality and his tenacious defense of the physiocrats. In both cases, it appears that Golitsyn's diplomatic service in The Hague and his position in Dutch society, where he chose to remain even after he left Russian service, turned out to be decisive factors for the development of his ideas and actions.

After a brief biographical introduction, I will discuss the professional, cultural and intellectual network that Golitsyn developed in his first years at the Russian legation in The Hague. The second part of the article focuses on his diplomatic work during his Dutch residency, which reveals how divergent his views, shaped by the Western European or Dutch context, were from the official Russian service. In the last part of the article, his move away from the diplomatic sphere demonstrates how the release from Russian service gave him more leeway to engage in scientific activities and re-evaluate some by then discredited ideas of the philosophes. This later period unveils the different layers of his liberalism: not only political, but also cultural and

8 Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Drevnykh Aktov (RGADA), fond 1263, opis 1, nr. 1111-1125.

9 To this end, I studied Golitsyn's correspondence in the Royal House Archive (The Hague),

National Archive (The Hague), Noord-Hollands Archief (Haarlem), the State Archive of Belgium (Brussels) and his scientific reports in the Archive of the Royal Academy (Brussels).



Bust of Dmitrii Alekseevich Golitsyn. Photo by Shakko, public domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:D.A._Golitsyn_by_M._Collot_02.jpg.

scientific, which resulted in a more reflective take on what constituted for him the essence of the ideas of Enlightenment.¹⁰

'Le prince savant': limited diplomacy and intellectual friendships in Paris (1754-1768)

Dmitrii Alekseevich Golitsyn was born in Moscow in 1734 as the son of Aleksei Ivanovich Golitsyn and Daria Vasilevna Golitsyna, née Gagarina.¹¹ Most biographies stipulate that after his training in the Kadetskiy Korpus, Dmitrii Golitsyn was employed by the Russian College of Foreign Affairs in 1754 and appointed as a member of a new diplomatic delegation to Paris in 1758.¹² This means that he spent two thirds of his life abroad, with very occasional visits to Russia. Golitsyn was appointed first *chargé d'affaires* (*sovetnik*) in Paris in 1762. His diplomatic work there seems limited compared to his later years in The Hague, but his years in Paris were nevertheless crucial because of the friendships he struck up with many French Enlightenment thinkers, like Voltaire, Comte de Buffon, Claude Adrien Helvétius and most notably Diderot. Golitsyn also often conferred with the physiocrats António Nunes Ribeiro Sanches and Pierre-Paul Lemercier de la Rivière. Meeting in the house of his good friend the French sculptor Étienne Maurice Falconet, they deliberated reforms in the Russian Empire. It was the young diplomat who secured Lemercier de la Rivière access to the Russian Imperial Court, which led to his contribution to Catherine II's *Nakaz* or Instruction for the All-Russian Legislative Commission of 1767.¹³

Already in 1764, Golitsyn was strongly inspired by the views of these physiocrats. He took up the question of serfdom in a series of letters to his cousin Aleksandr Mikhailovich Golitsyn in Saint Petersburg. Previously Russian ambassador to France and England, Aleksandr Golitsyn had returned to Russia and served as Vice-Chancellor in the College of Foreign Affairs.¹⁴ The decadelong correspondence between the cousins alternated between private and official letters which were also read by Empress Catherine II.¹⁵

10 Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory*, 120.

11 Grant Tsverava, *Dmitrii Alekseevich Golitsyn* (Leningrad 1985) 11.

12 Petr Apryshko a.o., *Russkaia Filosofii* (Moscow 2014); I.S. Bak, 'Dmitrii Alekseevich Golitsyn: Filosofskie, obshchestvenno-politicheskie ekonomicheskie vozzreniia', *Istoricheskie zapiski*, 26 (1948).

13 Gérard Klotz (ed.) *Politique et économie au temps des Lumières* (Saint-Etienne 1995) 157-158.

14 Georges Dulac, 'Les références philosophiques d'un réformateur: Dmitri A. Golitsyn entre Hume

et la physiocratie', *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 304 (1992) 917-921.

15 Notes by Empress Catherine on the letters can be found in the folio's at RGADA fond 1263, nr. 1111-1125. Golitsyn only corresponded occasionally with the Empress herself – mostly in the beginning of his stay in Paris in 1762. After 1770 their correspondence stopped altogether. See Georges Dulac and Ludmilla Evdokimova, 'Politique et littérature. La correspondance de Dmitri A. Golitsyn (1760-1784)', *Dix-Huitième Siècle* 22 (1990), 370.

In these letters, Dmitrii stated that the abolition of serfdom was the only way to move forward for Russia: only freeing the serfs and allowing them to own land would increase economic and cultural development in Russia. To defend his argument, he made a rather selective use of historical references, and quotes from contemporaries like David Hume, Gabriel Bonnot de Mably, Voltaire and others.¹⁶ Most notably, Golitsyn refers to the premise of Hume's essay *Of the Rise and Progress of Arts and Science* (1742) that the institution of laws is essential for the development of science, art and commerce, because 'from law arises security; from security curiosity; and from curiosity, knowledge'.¹⁷ Golitsyn adapted Hume's words to the Russian context, stating that

de la loi des États bien gouvernés, provident la propriété des biens du particulier; de la propriété provident l'assurance et la tranquillité de l'esprit; de cette tranquillité provident la curiosité; de la curiosité, tout sorte de savoir dans les arts, les sciences et la commerce.¹⁸

In other words, not only laws but also the property of goods (e.g. land for peasants) is essential for the development of science, culture and commerce in Russia. Moreover, Golitsyn made no mention of Hume's negative opinion of Peter the Great's despotism in the same essay.¹⁹ Golitsyn's selective manner of quoting shows how constrained he was in his attempts to transplant some of these ideas from a Western to a Russian, autocratic context. Nevertheless, in his correspondence with his cousin he took the liberty to express his critical views more openly than he might have done in a purely official correspondence. The Empress allowed this, because the Prince was an interesting source of information at a time that she explicitly looked west for intellectual and cultural inspiration. Only very rarely would her patience run out. On a letter of 30 October 1765, in which Golitsyn mentions a discussion with the French physiocrat Sanches on the abolition of serfdom, Catherine scribbled the sharp comment: 'Golitsyn and his friends speak lightly. Nothing prevents him from freeing his own serfs and giving them land; other, richer landowners who own many thousands of serfs might think and speak differently about this.'²⁰

16 From 1763 to 1765, David Hume was also living in Paris, working as a secretary to the British Ambassador Lord Hertford. In 1762, Hume's sixth and last volume of *The History of England* had just been published, which Golitsyn also referred to in his letters.

17 David Hume, *Of the Rise and Progress of Arts and Sciences*, 1742 (Indianapolis 1987) I.XIV.14.

18 Letter of Prince Dmitrii Alekseevich Golitsyn to Prince Aleksandr Michailovich Golitsyn of 6

September 1765, written in Paris, RGADA, fond 1263, opis 1, 1113, l.167-70. This 'altered' premise is most probably developed by Sanches in his essay *On Fine Arts*, see Klotz, *Politique et économie*, 120.

19 Hume, *Of the Rise and Progress*, 1742, I.XIV.11-12.

20 Letter of Prince Dmitrii Alekseevich Golitsyn to Prince Aleksandr Michailovich Golitsyn of 30 October 1765, written in Fontainebleau, RGADA, fond 1263, opis 1, 1113, l.191.

In 1767, diplomatic relations between France and Russia deteriorated to a point where Versailles sent official documents doubting the entitling of Catherine II as Empress of all Russia. The ensuing diplomatic row led Prince Golitsyn to be recalled. On his way back to Russia in 1768, Golitsyn made a stopover to take the waters in Aachen, where he met his future wife, countess Adelheid Amalia Von Schmettau. They got married in Aachen and embarked upon a two-year long trip that led them from Brussels and Spa to Vienna, Prague, Dresden, Berlin and their final destination, Saint Petersburg, where he was appointed ambassador to the Dutch Republic. In March 1770, Prince Golitsyn arrived in The Hague and presented his diplomatic credentials to the Stadtholder Willem v.

In The Hague, the Golitsyns settled into a regime of diplomatic work, maintaining a warm contact with Willem v of Orange-Nassau and his wife Wilhelmina, and receiving dignitaries at their residence on Kneuterdijk 22.²¹ These visitors were a mix of Russian nobility, statesmen, society figures and close friends.²² One of the most remarkable guests at Kneuterdijk was Diderot, who passed The Hague in the summer of 1773 on his way to Russia. After his return from Saint Petersburg in the spring of 1774, Diderot enjoyed Golitsyn's hospitality again, and stayed for several months, writing the first draft of his *Observations sur l'instruction de l'Impératrice de Russie*, a critical commentary on Catherine the Great's constitutional Nakaz-experiment.²³ Diderot characterises Golitsyn as a key figure for Russia on the Dutch and European diplomatic level²⁴, who created a fine network of contacts and provided a meeting place in The Hague on 'le Voorhoot [sic]'.²⁵ Diderot was not the only

21 Amalia Golitsyna maintained regular correspondence with the Prince and Princess of Orange-Nassau: Royal House Archive, The Hague, A31 inv.nr.92, 209, 634; A32 inv.nr.147, 148.

22 Diderot's passage was among others noted down by Caroline van Hogendorp, a friend of Amalia Golitsyna (see Letter of 3 February 1773 on Caroline van Hogendorp by Amalia Golitsyna to Willem v, and his reply, Royal House Archive, A31 Inv.nr.634. see also Edgar du Perron (ed.), *Een Lettré uit de 18e Eeuw: Willem van Hogendorp. Brieven en verzen uit het Algemeen Rijksarchief te 's Gravenhage* (The Hague 1940).

23 Jonathan Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment: Philosophy, Revolution, and Human Rights 1750-1790*. (Oxford 2013) 620.

24 See Denis Diderot, 'Lettres à Sophie Volland. La Haye, le 22 juillet 1773', *CXXXIV Oeuvres complètes de Diderot* xviii, xix, Texte établi par J. Assézat et Maurice Tourneux (Paris 1875) 341-343 and Georges Dulac, 'Diderot, Houdon et les princes Golitsyn', *Recherches sur Diderot et sur l'Encyclopédie*, 22 (1997) 28.

25 With 'Le Voorhoot', prince Kurakin means the Lange Voorhout, the street in The Hague that led to Prince Golitsyn's residence on Kneuterdijk. Alexander Kurakin, 'Souvenirs de voyage en Hollande et en Angleterre' in: *Arkhiv F.A. Kurakina, pod redaktsiei V.N. Smolianinova* (Moscow 1894) 938.



The former residence of prince Golitsyn and his wife Amalia at Kneuterdijk 22 in The Hague. (c) Lien Verpoest.

old friend passing by. In 1778, the sculptor Étienne Maurice Falconet, who had just finished the famous Bronze Horseman for Catherine, stopped in The Hague on his way back from Russia for a long stay at Kneuterdijk, joined in July 1779 by his daughter-in-law, the sculptress Marie-Anne Collot.²⁶

Apart from the diplomatic network Golitsyn developed in The Hague and the intermediary role he took up between the Russian Empire and European persons of interest, he also continued to correspond with his French friends, studying and disseminating their ideas. In 1772, Prince Golitsyn supervised the posthumous publication of Claude-Adrien Helvétius *De l'homme. De ses facultés intellectuelles et de son éducation*. Yet, it also seems that the Prince gradually toned down his liberal rhetoric. So far, he had been coming back to the subject of serfdom on a regular basis, but this seems to have stopped in 1772. The fact that he had expressed criticism of the Polish partitions in 1772 and Catherine later refused to let him receive the Polish Order of the White Eagle disappointed him.²⁷ The estrangement created by feeling out of favour of the tsarina combined with the retirement of his cousin in 1775 led Golitsyn to primarily focus on his Dutch and European network.

This western network had become 'more intense and more diversified' since 1770.²⁸ On the one hand, Golitsyn faithfully fulfilled his diplomatic duties, closely following the political developments in Western Europe, engaging in propaganda and delivering pro-Russian Dutchmen like Jan Hendrik van Kinsbergen the Order of Saint George.²⁹ On the other hand, Golitsyn corresponded about experiments and new scientific developments with scientists like Jan van Swinden and Martinus van Marum. The difference between his enthusiastic scientific correspondence preserved in Dutch archives and the dutiful diplomatic communiqués to the Russian Foreign Affairs Chancellor and the ever fewer letters to his cousin Golitsyn preserved in Moscow is striking.³⁰

Only two years after his appointment as Dutch ambassador, Golitsyn had become Russia's prime diplomat in Europe. European writers, diplomats and artists who wanted to travel to Russia first passed the Russian Mission

26 Marjan Sterckx, *Collot, Marie-Anne*, in: *Digitaal Vrouwenlexicon van Nederland*. <http://resources.huuygens.knaw.nl/vrouwenlexicon/lemmata/data/MarieAnneCollot> (accessed 12 May 2017).

27 Letter of Diderot to Aleksandr Michailovich Golitsyn of 4 November 1773, RGADA Fond 1263, opis 1 °1243a and Dulac, 'Diderot, Houdon et les princes Golitsyn', 27.

28 Dulac and Evdokimova, *Politique et Littérature*, 371.

29 Letter of Dmitrii Alekseevich Golitsyn to Jan Hendrik van Kinsbergen of 7 February 1776, written in The Hague. National Archive, Fonds J.H. van Kinsbergen, I212, inv.nr.22.

30 More specifically Golitsyn's letters to Martinus van Marum in the Noord-Hollands Archief (529, inv.nr.16, 16, 1-23), his letters to Jan van Swinden at the Leiden University Library, and his Reports and Letters to the Royal Academy of Arts and Sciences of Belgium.



Portrait of Adelheid Amalia Von Schmettau, unknown artist and date, public domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Adelheid_Amalie_Gallitzin.jpg.

in The Hague. Golitsyn remained a useful liaison for the Empress as well. By 1773, the Prince had bought over 46 paintings and 4000 drawings for Catherine, from collections of among others Count von Cobenzl in Brussels. Many of these drawings and paintings would become the basis of the collection of the Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg.³¹ As it turned out, with Golitsyn's move, the Russian centre of gravity in Europe had shifted from Paris to The Hague.

Diplomatic duties in The Hague

Despite the good relations with Stadtholder Willem v, Golitsyn primarily served as Catherine's diplomatic agent in the Dutch Republic. This required him to closely monitor the relations between Britain, France and the United States. Whereas during his time in Paris, Golitsyn had very limited diplomatic room for manoeuvre, his role in the formation of the 1780 League of Armed Neutrality enabled the Prince to 'write several pages of a new chapter in the history of his fatherland'.³² Although perceived by some as a diplomat-scientist who would rather read books than navigate the deep waters of diplomacy, Golitsyn played an important role in the development of relations with the newly independent United States, employing his Dutch network along the way.

When the Anglo-French war broke out in 1778 after France had formed an alliance with the United States, the transportation of Russian goods came under pressure. The British reasoned that belligerent goods contaminated a neutral vessel, which gave them the right to search the ship. This situation was especially difficult for the Dutch Republic. Although the States General claimed neutrality in the Anglo-French conflict, Dutch trade suffered from British provocations and reprisals. A British attack on a large Dutch convoy of merchant ships in early 1779 led the Dutch Republic to opt for an assertive response in April 1779, by announcing the establishment of unlimited Dutch convoys with their cargo protected by war ships.³³ This resulted into extremely tense naval relations between Britain and the Dutch Republic, and Catherine II was

31 Xavier Duquenne, 'Le prince Dmitri Galitzine (1734-1803) et la Belgique, avec son discours inédit en vue du développement des beaux-arts en Russie', *Revue belge d'archéologie et d'histoire de l'art* 82 (2013) 105-134; Catherine Phillips, 'Collecting Drawings: Russian Engagement in Elite Artistic Collecting Practices', in: Emmanuel Waegemans a.o. (eds.) *A Century Mad and Wise*.

Russia in the Age of Enlightenment (Groningen 2015) 472.

32 Tserava, *Dmitrii Alekseevich Golitsyn*, 43.

33 Hans van Koningsbrugge, 'A Dutch Disaster: Russia, the Netherlands, and the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War', in: Waegemans, *A Century Mad and Wise*, 196-197.

informed about these troubles by dispatches from Prince Golitsyn, who was sympathetic to the Dutch plight.

The overture

It was Prince Golitsyn in The Hague who made an overture that laid the foundation for the later League of Armed Neutrality. On 27 January 1780, he asked Willem v about the Dutch interest in joint action for the protection of neutral trade, who perceived this as be seen as ‘the offer of a mediation backed by force’ (‘eene mediatie te offereeren gewapender hand’).³⁴ In a conversation with Willem’s adviser, the Duke of Brunswick, on 30 January, Golitsyn detailed this ‘mediation by force’. He proposed that mediation with the British would be backed by twenty Russian and thirty Dutch warships.³⁵

Golitsyn reiterated this proposal to the Stadtholder on 31 January 1780, stating that Russia could provide twenty to twenty-five ships. Upon Willem’s request he also clarified the peace terms to be enforced: first of all, ‘the independence of the American colonies would have to be recognised, since there could be no peace in Europe as long as Britain entertained a hope of their recovery; and secondly Britain would have to recognise the rights of neutral trade at sea’.³⁶ This is a remarkable point of view of Golitsyn, because the demand to recognise the American independence could not be further from Empress Catherine’s official position.³⁷ Logically, this overture was met with extreme caution by the Dutch. On the one hand, this proposal offered them the much needed support against the rising British pressure. On the other hand, they feared this overture towards mediation would inevitably lead to war with Great Britain. And last but not least, Golitsyn gave the impression that the proposal was on his own authority rather than on that of Empress Catherine. This made the Dutch insecure, even more so when Golitsyn assured that the proposal was supported by France. Willem v suspected that the Russian Ambassador was not acting with Russian but with French backing.³⁸

34 Letter from the Prince of Orange-Nassau Willem v to Grand Pensionary Van Bleiswijk, 27 January 1780, Archives et correspondance inédite de la maison d’Orange Nassau, AMON, 2, 140, quoted in: Isabel de Madariaga, *Britain, Russia and the Armed Neutrality of 1780* (New Haven 1962) 153.

35 Royal Dutch Archive, inventory of the archives of Prince Willem v, A31, 1201, letter from Ernest Brunswick to Willem v, 30 January 1780.

36 Letter from the Prince of Orange-Nassau Willem v to Grand Pensionary Van Bleiswijk,

31 January 1780, AMON, 2, 1145, quoted in: De Madariaga, *Britain, Russia*, 153.

37 David Griffiths, ‘Commercial Diplomacy in Russia, 1780 to 1783’, *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 27:3 (1970) 379-410.

38 Yet Golitsyn only discussed these ideas with the French Ambassador le Duc de Vauguyon in The Hague on 3 February. Paul Fauchille, *La diplomatie française et la Ligue des neutres de 1780* (Paris 1893) 192.

Even though Catherine might not have known in advance of Golitsyn's proposal, she was eventually informed through his dispatches and was inspired by his proposal of armed mediation for her Declaration of Armed Neutrality. The seizure on 17 February 1780 of yet another Russian ship by the Spanish and the sale of its cargo in the port of Cadiz, turned out to be the last straw. On 25 February, Empress Catherine issued an ukase to the College of the Admiralty to arm a squadron of fifteen ships and five frigates. She also dispatched a personal communication to Golitsyn on the armament of these ships and her plans for the declaration, with the question to hear out the Dutch on their preparedness to defend their trade and join Russia.³⁹

The declaration and the pamphlet

Catherine's Declaration of Armed Neutrality of 28 February (10 March) 1780 asserted the right of neutral merchant ships to sail freely, with safety of their cargo. This Declaration was mainly aimed at privateers or corsairs who, until then, searched ships and seized this cargo with impunity. On April 3, less than a month after the Declaration, Golitsyn delivered to the States General a memorandum of Catherine II that reaffirmed her adherence to the principles of Armed Neutrality and invited the States General and also the courts of Stockholm, Copenhagen and Lisbon, to which this memorandum had simultaneously been delivered, to 'make common cause with her to protect trade and navigation and at the same time observe a strict neutrality'.⁴⁰

Prince Golitsyn's diplomacy did not go unnoticed in the Dutch Republic either. In that same year, 1780, a pamphlet appeared titled *Staat-kundig Schuit-Praatje, Gehouden in een Trek-Schuit, van Haarlem na[ar] Leyden. Tusschen Een Voornaam-Heer, Een Zee-Officier, Een Koop-Man, Een Koopvaardij-Schipper, Een Boer, Een Matroze-Vrouw en de Schipper der trek-Schuidt Spreekende over de Memorie, door de Rus-Keizerlijke Gezand Prins Gallitzin, den 3 April, 1780, aan hun Hoog Mogende overgegeven*.⁴¹ In this pamphlet, that was printed and sold in several Dutch cities, a plethora of people who represented interested parties (a nobleman, a captain, a sailor's wife, a merchant...) discussed the Memorandum on armed neutrality that Golitsyn delivered to the Dutch Republic on 3 April 1780.⁴² It is clear that this pamphlet was used and widely disseminated by means of pro-

39 Empress Catherine to Panin, 14/25 February 1780, *Morskoj Sbornik*, 43, 88, no. 19 and *De Madariaga, Britain, Russia*, 158-160.

40 Herbert H. Kaplan, *Russian Overseas Commerce with Great Britain During the Reign of Catherine II* (Philadelphia 1995) 123-124. For Golitsyn's correspondence on the Declaration and League of Armed Neutrality, see Royal Dutch Archive,

inventory of the archive of Prince Willem v, A31, 1201, e.g. Declaration of Prince Galitzyn, 3 April 1780 (which is Catherine's 'Memorandum').

41 *Staat-kundig Schuit-Praatje* (Arnhem 1780) The Hague, Royal Library (A-8 8); kw Pflf 19415.

42 The pamphlet was sold at booksellers in Arnhem, Amsterdam, Delft, Dort, Gouda, Groningen, Haarlem, The Hague, Hoorn, Leeuwarden,

STAAT-KUNDIG SCHUIT - PRAATJE,

Gehouden in een *Trek-Schuidt*, van HAARLEM
na LEYDEN.

TUSSCHEN

Een VOORNAAM-HEER, Een ZEE-
OFFICIER, Een KOOP-MAN, Een
KOOPVAARDY-SCHIPPER, Een
BOER, Een MATROZE-VROUW
en de SCHIPPER der
Trek-Schuidt

Spreekende over de

M E M O R I E,
Door de RUS-KEIZERLYKE Gezand
PRINS GALLITZIN, den 3. April, 1780.
aan HUN HOOG MOGENDE over-
gegeven.

A L S M E D E

Over de Onlangs Uitgekomen-gebreklyk Uitgewerkte
en nog Slegter Beredeneerde Plaat, tot Tytel voe-
rende, DENDOOR LIST EN GEWELD AAN-
GEVALLEN L E E U W.

Te Arnhem, by *J. H. Moleman*, Amst: *D. Schuurman*; Delft,
van der Smout, en de Groot; Dort, *van Braam*; Gouda, *Ver-
blauw*; Groningen, *Hufingh*; Haarlem, *van Delde* en Zoon,
en de wed: *van Brusfel*; s' Hage, *H. van Drecht*; Hoorn *Ver-
mande*; Leeuwarde, *Siccama'en Cahais*; Middelburg, *Gillisse*,
Rotterdam, *D. Vis* en de *Lœuw*, Utrecht, *Stubbe*, *Vlissinge*,
Corbelyn, Zutphen, *van Bulderen*, Zwol *Tyl* en verders *Alömme*.

Russian and anti-British propaganda. The pamphlet begins with the sailor's wife worrying about war between the Dutch Republic and Russia. The farmer on the boat points out that actually, war with the Russian Empire could not be far off because of the Memorandum that Russian Ambassador Prince Golitsyn delivered on 3 April to the Prince of Orange-Nassau.⁴³ The merchant goes on to discuss every part of the Memorandum in detail: the British nation is accused of 'onreedelycke handelwys' ('unreasonable behaviour') and is labelled 'waanwys en brutaal' ('conceited and insolent').⁴⁴ Prince Golitsyn's opinion is clearly formulated in the pamphlet. The merchant quotes Golitsyn as follows: 'De Russische Gezant "Prins Gallitzin", zegt ook geenzints te twyfelen of H. H. Mog. zullen de nodiging van Hare Majesteit in overweging neemen, en tot dezelve medewerken om zonder uitstel aan de Oorlogende Mogendheeden eene Declaratie te doen, op dezelve gronden als die van de Keizerin gevestigd (...)'.⁴⁵

A double game: Russian versus Franco-American interests?

As the American historian Paul Gilje points out, 'although technically the League was geared toward protecting neutral trade from depredations by all belligerents, its policies hurt Great Britain, which had the strongest navy and most extensive merchant shipping, of its own, more than France, Spain and the United States, which were more dependent upon neutrals for shipping'.⁴⁶ Both British ambassador (to The Hague) Sir Joseph Yorke, as well as British ambassador to Russia James Harris, saw in Prince Golitsyn the main culprit who inspired and incited Empress Catherine's actions towards armed neutrality. It is true that Golitsyn played a central role in the public and backdoor diplomacy during the spring and autumn of 1780, so much so that Harris asked for Golitsyn to be reprimanded for his too independent actions. In The Hague as well, Yorke lamented the fact that Golitsyn had blindsided him in the spring of 1780 and had never involved him as the British party in his consultations with the Dutch Republic about mediation. He stereotyped the Russian Prince as pro-French, with the following snide remark: 'Did Prince Galitzin pay any attention to me or shew any desire to be connected with me, I should never have declined it, but *he is all French*, little and polite and I have *no apparatus for electricity* nor any ambition to have my name enrolled as a *natural philosopher*'.⁴⁷

Middelburg, Rotterdam, Utrecht, Vlissingen, Zutphen, Zwolle, 'en verders Alömmen' [and in many other places].

43 *Staat-kundig Schuit-Praatje*, 6.

44 *Ibidem*, 8.

45 *Ibidem*, 17-18.

46 Paul A. Gilje, *Free Trade and Sailor's Rights* (Cambridge 2013) 43-44.

47 My italics. Sir Joseph Yorke to James Harris, 21 March 1780, Harris Papers, *Diaries and Correspondence of James Harris, First Earl of Malmesbury*, Vol. 1 (London 1844) 372-373.

The stereotyping of Golitsyn as a ‘scholar-prince’ who acted without specific Russian orders and fueled with pro-French sentiment also persisted among the Dutch, as Willem of Orange-Nassau’s hesitation to act upon Golitsyn’s January proposal shows. Yet, in Catherine’s February correspondence with him, she wrote specific instructions but stressed that he should not speak openly in her name. It shows that Golitsyn was the Empress’ confidant outside of Russia whom she had trusted enough to act upon his own.⁴⁸ The fact that he blindsided Yorke and Harris probably says more about Golitsyn’s sly diplomatic skills in the Dutch Republic than the diplomatic insight of the young Harris.⁴⁹

This is not to say that there was not a grain of truth in the French stereotype about Golitsyn. Indeed, he maintained good contacts with his Paris friends and colleagues throughout his life. And indeed, when the Dutch seemed positively inclined towards his proposal of armed mediation, he did not hesitate to inform Paul François de la Vauguyon, his French colleague in The Hague, of his willingness to mediate for Russian support to the States General. Vauguyon did not hesitate to inform his Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Comte de Vergennes. The American representatives in Paris seemed to be well-informed about Golitsyn’s intentions in the Dutch Republic as well. A coded letter of Charles Dumas, who acted as secretary of John Adams during his time in the Dutch Republic, to Benjamin Franklin, then American ambassador to France, mentions Golitsyn’s conversations with the Stadtholder and the Grand Pensionary Pieter van Bleiswijk. Dumas’ letter, which is dated 2 March 1780 (‘in the evening’), shows that he was extremely well-informed. Dumas writes that:

‘our friend [Pensionary Engelbert-François van Berckel] tells me in great confidence that the Stadtholder has at last made one principal step they expected from him, by proposing to the Russian Ambassador [Golitsyn] to sound his Empress about an alliance between this and the northern states for securing the commerce of neutrals. He delivered what he had to say to the Russian Ambassador as a young man not much used to such matter. But he still delivered it and the Russian ambassador has sent this very day an express to Petersburg on this errand. Our friend has this from the Ambassador himself and also from the Grand Pensionary [Pieter van Bleiswijk]. They are sure that Sweden and Denmark will accede to the measure’.⁵⁰

48 See Simon Dixon, *Catherine the Great* (London 2010) 158.

49 James Harris, 1st Earl of Malmesbury was ambassador in Russia from 1777 until 1783 and was 34 years old in 1780.

50 Dumas was a Swiss living in The Hague, member of Franklin’s committee of secret correspondence who kept Franklin informed about the political

goings-on in The Hague by means of mostly coded letters. For the coded version of the letter, see ‘To Benjamin Franklin from Charles-Guillaume Frédéric Dumas: two letters, The Hague, 2 March 1780’ (State Archive Brussels) on <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-32-02-0011#bnfn-01-32-02-0011-fn-0009> (accessed on 15 January 2019).

This letter demonstrates that Benjamin Franklin knew of Golitsyn's actions, even though the Russian diplomat officially was not in contact with Franklin, since Russia did not yet formally recognise the United States as an independent state. Yet, Golitsyn was clearly in favour of it, as his demand to the British on recognising American independence in his armed mediation proposal shows. In this sense, it is understandable that the Russian government identified Dmitrii Golitsyn in 2002 as one of the pioneers of Russian-American relations. He initiated and explored contacts with representatives of the United States almost thirty years before the first official American diplomatic legation was established in Russia, namely in 1807. Yet, Golitsyn's openness to the Americans in The Hague did not go down too well in Saint Petersburg.

The end of diplomacy

In the end, the Dutch Republic turned out to be the big loser of this venture. While the League of Armed Neutrality strengthened Russia's place on the European map, the Dutch Republic's intention to join the League led to the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War. However, this did not weaken Golitsyn's position in The Hague. He was believed to have done what he could for the Dutch and assured his friends that his diplomatic activities had always an amelioration of the situation of the Dutch in mind. In the beginning of April 1780, he wrote to his friend, the Dutch physicist Jan van Swinden: 'I am working with all my powers to pull You, gentlemen, out of the difficulties and wrestle You out of the clutches of the warring states. Soon, your newspapers will be full with reports about my actions. I hope to God that they will not be fruitless.'⁵¹ It turned out his efforts were not of much use to the Dutch, but significantly furthered the goals of Empress Catherine.

In the following year, other diplomatic duties awaited Golitsyn in The Hague. In 1781-1782, Empress Catherine's son Pavel Petrovich made a *tour d'Europe*. Pavel and his wife, travelling under the name of the Comte et Comtesse du Nord, travelled from France to the Dutch Republic. Golitsyn was required to oversee the protocol and practicalities of the crown prince's trip through the different Dutch cities.⁵² By then, Golitsyn's scientific interest had

51 Golitsyn to Van Swinden, 6 April 1780, Leiden University Library, nr. 457/1. On the correspondence between Golitsyn and Van Swinden, see Tsverava, *Dmitrii Alekseevich Golitsyn*, chapter 3.

52 In the memoranda written in preparation of the visit, it is mentioned that Prince Golitsyn made an

advance trip to check different castles where the imperial couple could stay. See 'Mémoire sur ce qui regarde le Séjour et la Tournée que Monsieur le Comte et Madame la Comtesse du Nord se proposent de faire dans les Pays-Bas', State Archive Brussels, Secretarie van Staat en Oorlog, nr. 1497.

grown to a point that it overclouded his enthusiasm for diplomatic duties. During the Armed Neutrality negotiations, he lamented to Van Swinden that ‘unfortunately, I am now far from my most beloved activities; politics absorbs and consumes all of my time’.⁵³

In the end, it was not Golitsyn’s preference for science but his sympathy for the American cause that seemed to have contributed to the end of his diplomatic mission in The Hague. Many of his friends were Dutch patriots who were inspired by the American independence and generally anti-British and pro-French.⁵⁴ As soon as he hinted the French Ambassador Vauguyon about his Armed Mediation proposal to the Dutch in early February 1780, Vauguyon put him in contact with another group of Dutch patriots. It was clear that more than Empress Catherine, Golitsyn saw the League of Armed Neutrality (or at least initially his own proposal of Armed Mediation) as an opening that could involve the American representation in naval politics, which in its turn could be perceived as a step to the Russian acceptance of the American independence. In this sense, his diplomatic manoeuvring was an essentially anti-British and pro-French move, very much in line with the sentiments of the Dutch patriots, who were similarly partial to the American cause.

Yet, these sentiments were not shared at the Imperial court in Saint Petersburg. Moreover, in 1782 it became clear that Golitsyn had been in contact with the American ambassador to the Dutch Republic John Adams.⁵⁵ It turned out that Golitsyn had sent a portrait of George Washington by diplomatic courier to Russia, on the request of Francis Dana, then American minister appointed to establish diplomatic contacts in Saint Petersburg. Since the Russian Empire had not yet recognised the American Independence, Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Ivan Osterman advised Golitsyn more restraint in his relations with ‘people from the colony that has torn itself away from Britain’.⁵⁶ The interception of the portrait in Russia two months after Osterman’s clear instructions had been sent, illustrates that Golitsyn had not heeded this advice and made a reprimand from Saint Petersburg likely. His carelessness cost him dearly. At the end of 1782, Golitsyn received the news that he would be recalled from The Hague and re-assigned to a new diplomatic mission in Turin. As a sign of gratitude for his diplomatic service in The Hague, he received the Imperial Order of St. Anna.

Golitsyn was disappointed and mulled his options. He was hesitant and unwilling to give up his Dutch network and friendships. Going to Turin

53 Golitsyn to Van Swinden, 6 April 1780, Leiden University Library, Nr. 457/1.

54 Like Jan van Swinden and Pensionary of Amsterdam Engelbert-François van Berckel.

55 After the Dutch Republic recognised the American independence in April 1782 with the

support of the Dutch patriots, John Adams became the first American Ambassador in The Hague (1782-1788).

56 Nikolai Bolkhovitinov, *Rossija i sshA za nezavisimost* (Moscow 1976) 103.

would remove him further from the Academy in Brussels and the Hollandsche Maatschappij in Haarlem; two institutions he maintained good contacts with and were important for his scientific output. After consulting his brother Petr, Golitsyn decided to leave diplomatic service and stayed in The Hague. This decision is illustrative of how for Golitsyn, his Dutch network and the intellectual freedom it brought prevailed over the restraints of Russian diplomatic service.

Golitsyn created his own laboratory in The Hague, started experimenting with natural electricity and published on mineralogy with the famous Dutch physician Petrus Camper.⁵⁷ Already in March 1778, Minister Plenipotentiary in Brussels Georges-Adam de Starhemberg had officially approved the exceptional procedure to make Golitsyn a member of the Brussels Académie impériale et royale des Sciences et Belles-Lettres.⁵⁸ In the years that followed, Golitsyn would address more than fifty letters to the Académie, reporting on his experiments with natural electricity, possible applications of electricity in medicine, and the work on the ‘Ongemeen Groote Electrizeermachine’ (electrostatic generator) with Martinus van Marum.⁵⁹ That same year, he also became a honorary member of the Saint Petersburg Academy of Sciences. Between 1770 and 1787, Golitsyn also regularly corresponded with Christiaan van der Aa and other members of the Hollandsche Maatschappij der Wetenschappen in Haarlem.⁶⁰

Resilience – the defense of the physiocrats

After the French invasion of the Dutch Republic in 1795, Prince Golitsyn resettled in Braunschweig (also known as Brunswick) in Saxony, and spent the last years of his life immersed in different aspects of the natural sciences. He became a foreign member of the Swedish Academy of Sciences in Stockholm (1788), of the Academy of Sciences in Berlin (1793), a member of

57 *Lettres sur quelques objets de minéralogie, à Mr. le professeur Petrus Camper, etc.* [By Prince D. A. Golitsuin] (The Hague 1789). For Golitsyn’s personal list of publications on mineralogy, see <http://www.minrec.org/libdetail.asp?id=474>. Earlier on, in 1777, Golitsyn and his wife Amalia were also in touch with Camper on the case of the deceased orangutan of Willem v, on which a whole dossier was compiled. Royal House Archive, A31 Inv.nr.209.

58 Nicolas-Edouard de Mailly. *Histoire de l’Académie impériale et royale des Sciences et Belles-Lettres de Bruxelles* (Bruxelles 1883) 271.

59 An example of this is his report on natural electricity sent to the Academy in Brussels, ‘Lettre de M. Le Prince de Gallitzin sur la Forme des Conducteurs Électriques, Lue à la Séance du 9 Novembre 1788’, in: *Mémoires de l’Académie impériale et royale des Sciences et Belles-Lettres de Bruxelles*, 3 (Brussels 1780).

60 *Briefwisseling tussen Vorst Von Gallitzin en Christiaan Carlous Hendricus van der Aa*, National Archive, The Hague, Fonds dr. mr. Leonard de Gou, access nr. 2.21.365, inventory nr. 370.

the prestigious Deutsche Akademie der Naturforscher Leopoldina in 1795, a member of the London Royal Academy in 1798 and President of the Jena Mineralogical Society from 1799 until his death in 1803.⁶¹ Yet, Golitsyn did not completely abandon the public debate. In 1793, he wrote a defense of Comte de Buffon, whose scientific work had been attacked and discredited after the French Revolution.⁶²

In 1796, Golitsyn published a book in Braunschweig titled *De l'Esprit des Économistes. Ou Les Économistes justifiés d'avoir posé par leurs principes les bases de la Révolution Française*. In this book, he strongly condemned the French Revolution and especially the Terror that followed, but distanced it from the philosophes, whose ideas had, according to Golitsyn, been ill-used and corrupted since 'des Jacobins, des Révolutionnaires, des Propogandistes, des Démocrates, avoient eu l'audace d'usurper le titre honorable de Philosophes'.⁶³ He argued that

les scélérats qui l'avoient depuis longtems préparée, fomentée, et à la fin exécutée, n'osoient pas y paroître à visage découvert; qu'au contraire ils s'étoient envelopés du manteau de la Philosophie; les gens superficiels qui n'aprofondissent rien, et pour qui le nom fait tout, ont pris la Philosophie pour l'horreur.⁶⁴

In his book, Golitsyn also returned to the issue of serfdom. Thirty years after he addressed this topic in his letters to his cousin, he devoted a chapter to it in his book:

Il ne peut jamais résulter pour l'Etat, aucun avantage de la servitude, mais bien pour quelques Particuliers, qui dans le fond agissent cependant contre leurs vrai intérêts. (...) Les Agriculteurs sont la portion la plus nombreuse, et la plus respectable d'un Etat; qu'ils nourrissent et vivissent. Si le Souverain en est le Chef, ils en sont, sans contredit, les bras; les retenir dans les fers, c'est le comble de l'absurdité et de l'inhumanité.⁶⁵

These words illustrate how little Golitsyn's opinion had changed on this topic, at a time when in Russia reactionary views ruled again and the idea of

61 He bequeathed his extensive collection of minerals and precious stones to the Society. The collection is now kept at the University of Jena.

62 In a letter to Van Marum of 17 April 1793, he mentions that he sent him *La défense de M. de Buffon* and describes how attached he was to de Buffon, and that he is not blind for some mistakes in his research, but considers the gross attack on his oeuvre by Mr. Delui and Mr. Sage so unjustified that he had to write a defense of the

man he held in such high esteem. See letter of Dmitrii Golitsyn to Martinus van Marum, 17 April 1793, Noord-Hollands Archief (529, inv.nr.16, 16, 1-23).

63 Dmitrii Golitsyn, *De l'esprit des économistes, ou, Les économistes justifiés d'avoir posé par leurs principes les bases de la Révolution française* (Brunswick 1796) 4.

64 Ibidem, 2.

65 Ibidem, 217.

liberating serfs was completely abandoned. Unhampered by diplomatic duties and strengthened by the many years in The Hague, Golitsyn showed his true colours. Gone was the selective transplantation of Western ideas, in which he took the Russian context into account. He gave an account of despotism in which he explicitly subscribed the words of Hume that he had filtered out of the Russian context three decades before:

Pouvoir arbitraire et lumières, ne se sont rencontrés nulle part ensemble. Partout où le Gouvernement a pour principe, pour objet et pour règle, le pouvoir arbitraire d'une part et la servitude de l'autre, on peut être sûr que les hommes y sont grossiers, ignorans et corrompus. (...) L'homme qui naît victime du Despotisme, dévoué au travail, soumis au caprice, abruti par les châtimens, sans cesse accablé par la crainte, n'acquiert d'autres idées que celles de la force, et ne connoit de bien que quelques jouissances furtives, précaires et incertaines. (...) Il est esclave, c'est tout dire; car l'esclavage est le dernier terme de dégradation pour l'espèce humaine, d'anéantissement pour la raison, et par une suite nécessaire, de dépravation pour les moeurs.⁶⁶

Conclusion: layered liberalism

Unlike most of his fellow countrymen, in the aftermath of the French Revolution and the Great Terror that shook the Western European and Russian elite to its core, Golitsyn still adhered to his earlier views, seeking to explain in his books how basically good ideas were distorted by the wrong crowd. Golitsyn's liberalism is in stark contrast with the increasingly reactionary views of his Empress and other Russian contemporaries like Nikolai Karamzin, Aleksandr Shishkov and Fedor Rostopchin in the last decade of the eighteenth century. All these men were well travelled in Europe, and some of them, like Karamzin, were initially even enthusiastic about the French revolutionary experiment, but all of them followed their Empress in her reactionary streak in the early 1790s. This is one of the reasons why Golitsyn was perceived by Soviet historians as one of Russia's first liberals. Staying true to his ideas, he was a beacon against the new Russian conservatism.⁶⁷

It was indeed somewhat exceptional that Golitsyn still defended the ideas of the Enlightenment in the 1790s. Maybe not as selectively and catered to autocracy as in the mid-1760s, but thoughtful, and well-considered, until the end of his life. Was this because he had lived outside Russia for so long? In Russia, reform could easily be replaced by reaction. Even under the enlightened Catherine, all elements of an autocratic society were firmly in

66 Golitsyn, *De l'Esprit des Économistes*, 246.

67 Discussed at length in Tserava, *Dmitrii Alekseevich Golitsyn*, 21-22.

et pour ce concerné
 vous aurez rendu à ma sœur
 et moi, et j'en ai été vraiment
 que elle-ci vous trouvera en

avec un attachement sincère
 et distingué,

Michel,
 Votre très humble et très
 obéissant serviteur
 Prince de Galicie



Letter signed by prince Dmitrii Alekseevich Golitsy to
 Jan Hendrik van Kinsbergen, 17 February 1796. (c) National Archives The
 Hague, nr.1.10.52, 22.

place. The facile switch of many members of the Russian elite to increasingly anti-European, patriotic and reactionary views after the French Revolution and even more so later on, in 1812, illustrates this.

For Golitsyn, this was different. The Prince had only spent the first part of his life in Russia. By the end of the eighteenth century, especially after he had left Russia's diplomatic service in 1782, he might have been somewhat alienated from autocratic Russian society. While many of his fellow countrymen of the 'Catherine' generation refocused their views on Eurasia in the aftermath of the Revolution and became some of the country's famous conservatives (Shishkov, Karamzin) and reactionaries (Rostopchin), Golitsyn continued to side with the, in his eyes, maligned philosophes: 'De tout tems la France a eu très-peu de vrais Philosophes, et à l'époque de la Révolution on n'en pouvoit citer aucun, quoique quantité de gens parmi les gens de lettres surtout, se crussent en droit d'y prétendre.'⁶⁸

Golitsyn's time in The Hague turned out to be a most crucial period on a cultural, diplomatic and, above all, intellectual level. As a diplomat, he was of excellent service to Empress Catherine and did groundbreaking work brokering the League of Armed Neutrality. As a friend of the Encyclopédistes and philosophes he was a mediator for both art and ideas between Europe and Russia, hosting Diderot and Falconet on and from their way to Saint Petersburg, enabling Lemercier de la Rivière to work on the Nakaz commission, translating and publishing the posthumous works of Helvétius, writing the defense of the physiocrats. As a scientist in The Hague, he established much appreciated contacts with academies and individual scientists like Martinus van Marum, Jan van Swinden and Petrus Camper. He started and ended his family life in The Hague. After his years in Paris, which inspired him with many new ideas, Golitsyn's appointment in The Hague provided him with the necessary political and academic room for manoeuvre that led to his most important diplomatic and scientific accomplishments.

Yet the cultural, diplomatic and scientific layers in which he expressed his liberal views also suffered from the contrasting Russian and Western European contexts. Empress Catherine supported his contacts with the philosophes and asked him to actively mediate for Diderot's visit to Russia. Yet, her anger after Diderot's rather critical account of his stay in Russia, just like her falling-out with Golitsyn's close friend Lemercier de la Rivière during the Nakaz Commission years before, weakened the diplomat's position. Instead of bringing Russia and Western Europe closer (through a Nakaz inspired by *De l'Esprit des Lois*, for example), it turned out that the philosophes and physiocrats brokered by Golitsyn to visit the Russian court only pointed out how different, even incompatible the Western European and Russian contexts were. Despite the reforms and the Nakaz experiment, Russia did not manage to internalise the ideas of the Enlightenment. In the early 1780s,

68 Golitsyn, *De l'Esprit des Économistes*, 2.

Golitsyn's pro-French and pro-American diplomatic preferences turned out to be incompatible with the official Russian position. His reappointment and withdrawal from state service was a logical consequence. And lastly, also on the scientific level, the contrasting contexts became ever more apparent. Not only did he address the Russian Academy in a 1767 letter about the development (or rather nondevelopment) of the fine arts in the Russian Empire, but Xavier Duquenne's overview of his contacts with European academies and scientists in Brussels illustrates how much more intense his scientific contacts were with Western academies than with their Russian counterpart.⁶⁹

In this sense, Golitsyn did not abandon his views. His three decades in The Hague made his ideas on politics and society diverge from those of his compatriots in Russia. Despite the obligations of Russian diplomatic service, he compartmentalised his European ideas on a cultural, diplomatic and intellectual level. And he did not compromise. Thirty years after his letters on the abolition of serfdom, he reiterated his 1765 position in an even stronger manner in his 1796 defense of the physiocrats. Also on the diplomatic level, he did not compromise, but left state service instead. As post-1789 Russia withdrew once again into the comfortable arms of autocracy, Catherine's state-supported liberalism proved to be mere rhetoric. It was the Dutch context that led to Golitsyn's layered liberalism: it enabled his contributions in the domains of natural electricity and mineralogy and a more thoughtful and reflective view upon the ideas of the philosophes.

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69 Apart from Van Marum, Camper and Van Swinden, he also maintained good relationships with the naturalist and mathematician George-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon in France, and the

chemist Karl Heinrich Joseph Graf Von Sickingen in Germany. See Xavier Duquenne, *Le prince Dmitri Galitzine*, 120.