

# Count Ludwig von Zinzendorf's Diplomatic Mission to Saint Petersburg in 1755

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**Abstract.** Count Ludwig von Zinzendorf is first and foremost known as an outstanding Austrian economist who greatly contributed to the national reform of finances and administrative efficiency. The early years of his career were spent in the diplomatic service under the guidance and patronage of Count Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz, who placed much hope in the ambitious young aristocrat. One of the significant episodes of Zinzendorf's diplomatic career was a mission to Russia in 1755. Its formal pretext was to convey the congratulations of the imperial couple to Empress Elizabeth I on the birth of the heir to the throne, Grand Duke Paul. At the same time, Zinzendorf was entrusted with a secret mission of learning more about the main vectors of Russian foreign policy, establishing more confidential relations with the rival groupings at the St. Petersburg court, and promoting closer joint action between Vienna, London, and St. Petersburg against Prussia in the inevitable continental war. The witty analytical mind and exceptional sociability of Zinzendorf allowed him to accomplish both missions brilliantly, the results of which he reported to Kaunitz. This paper considers both the official and unofficial activities of the imperial and Austrian envoy during his visit, the complications he faced, and the solutions he found during his two journeys to Russia in 1755 against the backdrop of Austrian-Russian relations in their heyday on the eve of the Seven Years' War.

**Keywords:** Austrian-Russian diplomatic relations, symbolic communication, Russian court, diplomatic dispatches

Count Ludwig Friedrich Julius von Zinzendorf (1721–1780), “the outstanding theoretical mind” of the Habsburg Monarchy, as Grete Klingenstein characterized him in a study on Mercantilism and Physiocracy,<sup>1</sup> is most widely known as having been a leading expert in finance, a councilor at the *Directorium in Publicis et Cameralibus* (Direction of Administration and Finance), and the head of the *Hofrechenkammer* (Court Audit Office).<sup>2</sup> Yet there was an episode in his career which is usually only briefly, if at all, mentioned in his biographies: a diplomatic mission to St. Petersburg

1 Klingenstein, “Between Mercantilism and Physiocracy,” 183.

2 See: Dickson, *Finance and Government*, vols 1–2.

in 1755 on the occasion of the birth of the heir to the Russian throne Grand Duke Paul (the future Paul I).<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, its significance for Austrian-Russian bilateral relations and the turbulent circumstances surrounding the visit reveal mechanisms of backstage diplomacy that make it deserving of particular study. This paper offers an account of the mission based on Zinzendorf's letters, dispatches, and comprehensive memoirs to State Chancellor Count Wenzel Anton Kaunitz (1711–1793), as well as reports of the imperial and Austrian ambassador to St. Petersburg Count Nicolaus Esterházy (1711–1764),<sup>4</sup> the Russian and Austrian sovereigns' letter-exchange, ceremonial acts regarding the solemn audience at the Russian court, and *Wienerisches Diarium* reports. It strives to show Austrian-Russian relations as the communication between two dynasties, two courts, and two governments at a turning point in European diplomacy on the eve of the reversal of alliances, or the diplomatic revolution of 1756, and the role of Ludwig von Zinzendorf as a diplomat in action, promoting and securing bilateral relations.

### Family and early career

In the age of confessionalization, the family of Zinzendorf, in common with many others in the Habsburg Lands, was split into Catholic and Protestant branches.<sup>5</sup> Ludwig's great-grandfather Maximilian Erasmus sold his estates to Catholic relatives and moved to Nuremberg, where, on 23 September 1721, the future Austrian statesman was eventually born. The second marriage of Ludwig's father Friedrich Christian (1697–1756) was to Saxon Countess Christiana Sophia Callenberg, who introduced her husband to the court circles of Dresden. Ludwig's half-brother from this marriage was Count Karl von Zinzendorf (1739–1813), later governor of Trieste and a renowned diarist.<sup>6</sup> After a rigorous home-based Pietist education, Ludwig's early socialization began at the age of 17 in the Saxon army. However, he soon moved to Lower Austria with the ambitious hope of obtaining a position in the government and building an administrative career. Logical steps towards this goal were his conversion to Catholicism and joining the freemasonry. Much later, in 1764, when Maria Theresa established the Order of St. Stephen to reward the achievements of civil servants, Ludwig von Zinzendorf was among those who applied for this sign of royal grace. From the following lines, it is explicitly clear that his conversion

3 See: *Aus der Zeit Maria Theresias*, 4, 516.

4 On his biography see: Khavanova, "Madridtól Szentpétervárig."

5 Ludwig's uncle, his father's half-brother Nicolaus Ludwig (1700–1760), was a renowned theologian, bishop of the Moravian Church and missionary who preached in the Netherlands and in Pennsylvania in North America.

6 See: Klingenstein, Farber, and Trampus, eds. *Europäische Aufklärung zwischen Wien und Triest*.

involved an act of breaking up with his Protestant family and a symbolic reunion with his Catholic ancestors:

“I descend from a family which, as is well known, has rendered the most faithful service as members of the most noble Estates here in Austria for seven hundred years [...]; since loyalty to the souverain is to be regarded as the greatest adornment of the nobility, this loyalty is peculiar to my family in such a way that at the time when most of the noble families in the country took part in the troublesome religious unrest and put aside their most submissive devotion to the highest souverain, the names of some Zinzendorfs were once to be seen among them, a circumstance which I take the liberty of mentioning for the sake of it, because various of Your Majesty's most glorious ancestors have deigned to show my family the most gracious satisfaction about it.”<sup>7</sup>

In Vienna, Zinzendorf skillfully profited from his ability to make useful acquaintances. Soon he became acquainted with Count Johann Joseph von Khevenhüller (1706–1776), whose protection paved Ludwig's way to the suite of Emperor Francis upon his coronation in Frankfurt in 1745, and following whose advice he completed a year at the University of Leipzig in 1746 and then successfully applied to a minor position in the government of Lower Austria.<sup>8</sup> He was a regular guest in the salon of Princess Maria Anna Esterházy (née Lunatti-Visconti, 1713–1782), the wife of Prince Paul Anton II (1711–1762),<sup>9</sup> the army officer and future general whom Zinzendorf had met during his military service. Maria Anna introduced him in 1749 to the future state chancellor Count Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz,<sup>10</sup> who by that time was an experienced diplomat with a wide perspective on international relations, administration, and economics. Dissatisfied with the outdated system of aristocratic patronage at the expense of promoting talent, he quickly recognized Zinzendorf as an inquiring mind and encouraged him to read and translate from English and French and form a broader European perspective about the latest economic thinking.<sup>11</sup> In 1750, Kaunitz was appointed ambassador to Paris and invited Ludwig, among other young trainees, to join him. Another member of the Kaunitz

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7 Alleruntertänigstes Anlegen und Bitten Ludwig Friederich Julius Grafen und Herrn von Zinzendorf und Potterdorf [...] über allergnädigste Verleihung des Großkreuzes des zum erneuernden hohen Ordens Sti Stephani Regis Hungariae betreffend, s. d. et. l. MNL-OL P 1058. 29. cs., no. 86.

8 Adler, *Political Economy*, 23–25. In this biographical survey, he uses mainly *Die Selbstbiographie des Grafen und Herrn Ludwig Friedrich Julius von Zinzendorf*, 46–54.

9 See: Kalmár, “Adalékok.”

10 Klingenstein, *Der Aufstieg des Hauses Kaunitz*.

11 Adler, *Political Economy*, 26.

circle was the future ambassador to Turin, St. Petersburg, Warsaw, and Paris, Count Florimund Mercy d'Argenteau (1727–1794). His years in France were used to integrate with the intellectual milieu, to become acquainted with the economy, finances, and army of the French monarchy, and for travel, observation, and writing. Having returned to Vienna with broadened horizons and experiences, he was employed at the *Directorium in Publicis et Cameralibus* and made his future career in the financial sphere. One notable digression in his career was his turbulent trip to Russia in 1755.

### The birth of the Russian Grand Duke

St. Petersburg and Vienna signed their first treaty in 1726. This remained on paper for a long time and was limited to the presence of envoys and ambassadors at the friendly court, and did not lead either to an intensification of trade and economic ties, or to actual cooperation on the battlefield—for example, in the War of the Austrian Succession (1740–1748). The two continental empires are rightfully called ideal allies in historiography: they had no mutual territorial claims, but they had common enemies: the Ottoman Porte, and later also Prussia. Thanks to the alliance with Austria, Russia strengthened its position in Europe, while the Viennese court could count on Russian weapons in case of a new war.<sup>12</sup>

It was precisely the need for friendship with Russia that explains the forced consent of Maria Theresa—surrounded by enemies—to the formal recognition in 1742 of the imperial title of the Russian tsars. However, the following year the alliance did not stand the test caused by the scandal surrounding the envoy Marquis Antonio Botta d'Adorno (1688–1774), who allegedly supported the aristocratic conspiracy aimed at overthrowing Elizabeth, and in 1744 Vienna and St. Petersburg broke off allied relations. However, Vice-Chancellor Mikhail Illarionovics Vorontsov (1714–1767) advised the Empress thus:

“And although, most gracious Empress, Your Imperial Majesty is personally distressed by the evil intention and deeds of the nefarious Botta [...] In the common interest of your state, it is dangerous to allow this fall of the House of Austria to happen, considering that, given the changes in Europe are frequent, Russia may need it to fight off the Turkish invasions.”<sup>13</sup>

12 Steppan, *Akteure am fremden Hof*; Duchhardt, *Balance of Power und Pentarchie*.

13 “A copy of the opinion which the vice-chancellor Count Vorontsov submitted to Her Imperial Majesty in Kiev on 11 September 1744.” In *Arkhiv kniazia Vorontsova*, vol. 2, 73 (original in Russian).

In 1746, the two courts signed a new treaty directed against Prussia, supplementing it with secret articles on joint military operations against the Turks. In 1753, the provisions of these secret articles were confirmed by a new treaty.<sup>14</sup>

The Russian tsars and the House of Austria arranged only one intermarriage: in 1799, Archduke Joseph (1776–1847), the younger son of Emperor Francis II(I) and the Palatine of Hungary, married Grand Duchess Aleksandra (1783–1801), the daughter of Paul I. As the pair had no prospect of inheriting the throne, the bride was allowed to keep her Greek Orthodox religion. The marriage was tragically short-lived: Alexandra Pavlovna died of puerperal fever. Yet in the 'golden age' of their close cooperation, these confessionally incompatible dynasties succeeded in establishing their continuing spiritual kinship through godparenthood.

In January 1747, as Maria Theresa was expecting a baby, she and Francis I sent official letters to Empress Elizabeth with an invitation for her to be the godmother of their future child, an archduke, or archduchess.<sup>15</sup> The invitation was accepted, and as the 'Hungaro-Bohemian queen' gave birth to her third son, Empress Elizabeth was notified that she had become the godmother of the newly born Peter Leopold Joseph Johann Anton, and that at the baptism she had been represented by Herzog Karl of Lorraine (1712–1780), the Emperor's younger brother.<sup>16</sup> Johann Joseph Khevenhüller wrote in his diary that Empress Elizabeth had requested the special favor of giving the newly born archduke the name 'Peter' out of love and veneration for her father Peter the Great.<sup>17</sup> Angela Stöckelle, however, was of the opinion that the idea of naming the future archduke Peter (and the future archduchess 'Elizabeth') came from the ambassador at the Saint Petersburg Court, Baron Johann Franz von Pretlack (1708–1767).<sup>18</sup> After his birth, the archduke was regularly mentioned as 'Peter Leopold' in the Viennese court calendars and newspapers until the early 1760s, even if in 1753 Maria Theresa had changed her son's official name-day from June 20 to November 15. Between 1754 and 1762, it was only the Russian minister who greeted the archduke on the name-day of St. Peter and Paul.<sup>19</sup> Later on, the archduke became known as Grand Duke of Tuscany Pietro Leopoldo, and gave up the name Peter when he was crowned emperor of the Holy Roman Empire in 1790.<sup>20</sup>

14 *Sbornik traktatov i konventsii*, 146–78, 183–88; Nelipovich, *Soiuz dvuglavykh orlov*.

15 Letter of Emperor Francis I to Empress Elizabeth, Vienna, January 1747, AVP RI, Fond (Fund) 32, Opis (Inventory) 2, Delo (File) 143; Letter of Empress Maria Theresa to Empress Elizabeth, Vienna, January 1747, *ibid.*, Delo 144.

16 Letter of Emperor Francis I to Empress Elizabeth, Vienna, 5 May 1747, AVP RI, Fond 32, Opis 2, Delo 145; Letter of Emperor Francis I to Grand Duke Peter, Vienna, 5 May 1747, *ibid.*, Delo 146.

17 *Aus der Zeit Maria Theresias*, 2, 153.

18 Stöckelle, "Taufzeremoniell," 323–24.

19 Beck, "...aus besonderer Distinction für den russisch[en] kaj[serlichen] Hof", 124–25.

20 Wandruszka, *Leopold II – Erzherzog von Österreich*, 17.

Godparenthood had already become one of the forms of establishing family relations with European courts under Peter I, when in 1715, at the baptism of tsarevich Petr Petrovich (1715–1719) in St. Petersburg, foreign monarchs were represented by the tsar's favorite Aleksandr Danilovich Menshikov (1673–1729) and the Danish minister. The Russian court was of the opinion that due to their remoteness from the European capitals, it was enough—until the formal acceptance of the godparents arrived—to obtain the formal assurance of the foreign diplomat that their monarch would accept the honor.<sup>21</sup> As the future heir to the Russian throne, Paul was born on 1 October (20 September) 1755,<sup>22</sup> and the next day Count Franz Santi (1683–1758), *Ober-Zeremonienmeister* of the Russian Court, met with the imperial and Austrian ambassador Count Nikolaus Esterházy (1711–1764) and asked him to inform his sovereigns Maria Theresa and Francis I that they were (*post festum*) invited to be the godparents of the newly-born grand duke. The baptism took place on October 6 (September 25) in the palace chapel. Esterházy was not invited, and the godparents were symbolically represented by Empress Elizabeth herself.<sup>23</sup>

The consent of the imperial couple to be the godparents had to be officially requested by sending an embassy. Wishing to organize this act with due solemnity, the Russian court first intended to send to Vienna a person whose ancestry and rank would somehow smooth over the awkwardness that had arisen. According to Esterházy, the choice was then first for Count Petr Borisovich Sheremetev (1713–1788), the son of Peter the Great's associate, General Boris Petrovich Sheremetev (1652–1719), and the son-in-law of the late Chancellor Prince Alexei Mikhailovich Cherkassky (1680–1742). However, it turned out that the chamberlain and general (promoted in rank a few weeks before the birth of the grand duke, probably in anticipation of the planned mission to Vienna) fell ill in Moscow and was unable to quickly recover and leave for Vienna.

It also turned out that among the Russian chamberlains (as Esterházy reported to Vienna), none were fluent in German or French except for Baron Karl Efimovich Sievers (1710–1774). He belonged to a branch of the Sievers family, which had fallen on hard times and owed its change in fortune to the favor of the young Princess Elizabeth (who at that time had almost no hope of the throne) to the young Karl prior to her accession. In 1745, on the eve of the election of Maria Theresa's spouse Francis of Lorraine, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, the Saxon Elector August III exercised

21 Ageeva, *Diplomaticeskii tseremonial imperatorskoi Rossii*, 697.

22 Hereafter dates according to the Julian calendar are given in brackets.

23 Letter of Nikolaus Esterházy to Rudolph Joseph von Colloredo, St. Petersburg, 8 October 1754. ÖStA, HHStA StAbt, Russland I, Kt. 36, fol. 101 r–v (original in German); Letter of Nikolaus Esterházy to Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz, St. Petersburg, 8 October 1754, Ibid., Russland II. Kt. 36, fol. 106 r–v (original in German).

his right of imperial vicariate and promoted Sievers to imperial baron. In addition, and probably to add importance to the embassy, the twenty-year-old Count Petr Aleksandrovich Buturlin (1734–1787), of ancient aristocratic pedigree and the future Russian ambassador to Madrid (1762–1763), was also included in the delegation.

Two weeks after the birth of the grand duke, Baron Sievers and Count Buturlin travelled to Vienna with the notification letters from Empress Elizabeth and Grand Duke Peter (the future Peter III) to Maria Theresa and Francis I.<sup>24</sup> The embassy arrived on 29 (18) December 1754, and on 5 January 1755 (25 December 1754) Karl Sievers solemnly presented the imperial couple with the notification letters. In accordance with the custom established by Maria Theresa, Sievers in the following days received audiences with all her children: first, with the senior archdukes (the future Emperor Joseph II was 13 years old, his brother Karl was nine, and Empress Elizabeth's godson Peter Leopold was seven), then with the five archduchesses, each of whom greeted him with a compliment, and finally with the babies Ferdinand and Johanna, who were held on harnesses by their nurses.<sup>25</sup> The farewell audience for Baron Sievers was given by Francis I and Maria Theresa on 26 (15) January, and by the archdukes and archduchesses the next day. In the evening, Russian Ambassador Heinrich Karl Count von Keyserling (1697–1764) invited court society to his residence in Palais Rofrano to celebrate the birth of Grand Duke Paul. Count Ludwig von Zinzendorf, already appointed extraordinary envoy to St. Petersburg, was present to demonstrate his respect for the allied court.<sup>26</sup>

At the end of January 1755 in Vienna, the texts of congratulation letters to Empress Elizabeth and Grand Duke Peter were compiled: they contained expressions of joy on the birth of the heir and their consent to act as godparents. Maria Theresa assured her “sister and friend” that:

“I earnestly wish that the new-born Grand Duke, in the great future hope for which he was chosen, reaches a perfect age, and a new guarantee will establish the closest and most useful union that exists between both

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24 Concept of the notification letter of Empress Elizabeth to Emperor Francis I, St. Petersburg, 25 September 1754, AVP RI, Fond 32, Opus 1, 1754, Delo 1 (in Russian and Latin); concept of the notification letter of Grand Duke Peter to Emperor Francis and Empress Maria Theresa, St. Petersburg, 20 September 1754, *ibid*, Delo 3. See also: Instruction for Karl Sievers leaving for Vienna, Delo 8, fol. 20r (original in Russian).

25 Report of Baron Karl Sievers to Empress Elizabeth, Vienna, 8 January 1755 (28 December 1754), AVP RI, Fond 32, Opus 1, 1754, Delo 8, fol. 117v (original in Russian). Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger writes that Maria Theresa considered the ceremonial appearances of her children to be an important element of early preparation for monarchic duties. See: Stollberg-Rilinger, *Maria Theresa*, 468–69.

26 ÖSta, HHStA OMeA ZA-Prot. 22 Zeremonialprotokoll, 1755–1756, fol. 12v–15.



monarchies, in the observance of which in eternal times, as much as it depends on me, I will not fail to help.”<sup>27</sup>

Count Ludwig von Zinzendorf, chosen for this mission by Chancellor Kaunitz, prepared to set off for St. Petersburg in January or February. The Russian court rushed the emissary, expecting him to arrive in the first week of Lent and to stay longer in order to take part in the large-scale festivities and balls thereafter.<sup>28</sup> However, owing to muddy roads, Zinzendorf only reached the Russian capital on 31 (20) March 1755. Princess Tatiana Golitsyna wrote to her son in London:

“He has come here. I presume I shall see him at the Court this week. There is great fame for his beauty and dignity. He has come at such a time that there is no amusement here. Inasmuch as it is the third week of Lent. I hardly believe him to stay here till Easter.”<sup>29</sup>

The days after his arrival, Zinzendorf visited Great Chancellor Count Alexei Petrovics Bestuzhev-Riumin ld. 9. I. (1693–1766) and Vice-Chancellor Count Mikhail Illarionovich Vorontsov; on 2 April, *Ober-Zeremonienmeister* Count Franz Santi; on 3 April, Cabinet-Secretary Count Adam Vasilievich Olsufiev (1721–1784); and on 5 April the Saxon Minister Johann Ferdinand August von Funk. The audience with the empress was scheduled for 9 April, but “due to an illness that he suffered” it was postponed to 27 (16) April 1755,<sup>30</sup> Palm Sunday (Julian calendar).

## Mission completed

Georg Braungart, in a study on court rhetoric, described the fundamental difference between academic speech imbued with humanistic knowledge and designed to be the culmination of a festive event, and courtly-political speech, which gains

27 Maria Theresa’s congratulation letter to Empress Elizabeth, Vienna, 29 January 1755. AVP RI, Fond 32, Opus 2, Delo 175. See also: Francis I’s congratulation letter to Empress Elizabeth, Vienna, 26 January 1755. AVP RI, Fond 32, Opus 2, Delo 171; Francis I’s congratulation letter to Grand Duke Peter, Vienna, 26 January 1755. AVP RI, Fond 32, Opus 2, Delo 172; Maria Theresa’s congratulation letter to Grand Duke Peter, Vienna, 27 January 1755. AVP RI, Fond 32, Opus 2, Delo 173. All originals are in Latin.

28 Letter of Nikolaus Esterházy to Wenzel Anton Kaunitz, St. Petersburg, 4 March 1755. ÖSta, HHStA, StAbt, Russland II, Kt. 37, fol. 36v.

29 Letter of Tatiana Golitsyna to Alexandre Golitzyn, St. Petersburg, 5 April (25 March) 1755, “Iz semeinoi khroniki roda Golitsynykh,” 18 (original in Russian).

30 Letter of Nikolaus Esterházy to Rudolph Joseph Collaredo, St. Petersburg, 31 Martii 1755, ÖSta, HHStA StAbt, Russland I, Kt. 36, 1755, fol. 205r–v (original in German); Rescript to Heinrich Karl Count von Keyserling, St. Petersburg, 18 April 1755, AVP RI, Fond 32, Opus 1, 1755, Delo 3, fol. 122r (original in German).



meaning only from the place to which it is assigned in the ceremonial context. Unlike humanistic speeches often published as brochures which commemorated the author and their intellectual deeds, speeches given at court often perished, having fulfilled their function of filling an intended “empty space” in a “form” as appropriate as possible.<sup>31</sup> The solemn ceremony held on 27 April was designed as a court event, yet the speeches given and their symbolic messages were of such importance that the related texts were published in *Wienerisches Diarium*.<sup>32</sup>

Ludwig von Zinzendorf was received in the Winter Palace on 27 April 1755 at around noon, where he had travelled in the ambassador's carriage drawn by six horses. The Empress was accompanied by the chancellor on her right-hand side, and the vice-chancellor on her left. In the presence of the most prominent members of court society, he handed to the chancellor four letters in Latin, which were from Francis I and from Maria Theresa to both Empress Elizabeth and Grand Duke Peter, soon after arrival. During the audience, Zinzendorf delivered three short speeches (*Harangues*), and received responses. His speech to Elizabeth I, the happy and proud grand-aunt, was in German, and the answer on behalf of the empress was given in Russian by Great Chancellor Bestuzhev-Riumin. The speech to Grand Duke Peter, as was the habit in communication with the young count, was delivered in French, and the answer in the same language was read by *Kammerjunker* (the *Wienerisches Diarium* called him “chamberlain”<sup>33</sup>) Lev Aleksandrovich Naryshkin (1733–1799). Both orators carefully avoided the circumstance that the grand duke was not only a relative of Emperor Francis, but also—as Duke of Holstein-Gottorp—his vassal. The third speech to Grand Duchess Catherine (the future Catherine II) was also given in French. Inasmuch as none of the grand duchess's chamberlains possessed French, the response

31 Braungart, *Hofberedsamkeit*, 59.

32 “Aus dem Rußischen Reich,” *Wienerisches Diarium*, June 4, 1755, no. 46, Anhang. In a similar way, the newspaper published the orations delivered at the audience given to Baron Pretlack who arrived in St. Petersburg with the notification that Maria Theresa had given birth to Arch-Duchess Maria Amalia (1746–1804) (see: “Aus dem Rußischen Reich,” *Wienerisches Diarium*, June 4, 1746, no. 45, Anhang) and at the audience given to Baron Kettler who was sent to St. Petersburg with the notification that Elizabeth at the baptism of the newborn Archduke Leopold had been symbolically represented by the emperor's brother Karl von Lorraine (see: “Aus dem Rußischen Reich,” *Wienerisches Diarium*, July 15, 1747, no. 56, Anhang).

33 *Kammerjunker* (Chamber-page) was a position and rank at court in eighteenth-century Russia. In the Petrine *Table of Ranks*, this was the ninth rank, corresponding to that of titular council in government, or captain of infantry in the army. In 1737, *Kammerjunker* was elevated to the sixth rank, and in 1742 to the fifth the rank. There was no clear description of the associated duties; they mostly consisted of presence at court and fulfilling the commissions of the monarch. At the Vienna Court there was no *Kammerjunker* rank, and to adjust the Russian court rank system to that used in Vienna, both in the ceremonial minutes and in the periodicals Russian *Kammerjunkers* were usually mentioned as chamberlains.

was entrusted to a young noble from the suite of a grand-duke, *Kammerjunker* Vasily Efimovich Daragan (1735–?),<sup>34</sup> the nephew of Chief Hunter (*Oberjägermeister*) Count Alexei Rasumovsky (1709–1771), a former favorite of Empress Elizabeth.

The four letters delivered by Zinzendorf, and the six compliments given during the audience, were built around three main topics. First, each speaker paid tribute to Empress Elizabeth who was the true beneficiary of the event. Ludwig von Zinzendorf closed his compliment with the following words:

“I, who have the inestimable pleasure of conveying the congratulations of their majesties, count this day among the happiest of my life, inasmuch as I have an opportunity to bow down before such a glorious monarch and personally see with astonishment what the glorification of all Europe has already informed me of.”<sup>35</sup>

It was the Russian sovereign who invited the Austrian imperial-royal couple to act as the godparents of her grandson, as Zinzendorf said when addressing the Grand-Duke,<sup>36</sup> and it was Elizabeth’s will to see an heir to the Russian throne, as the ambassador conveyed to the Grand Duchess.<sup>37</sup>

Second, the letters and compliments extolled the godparent relationships as reciprocal endeavors of the dynasties and courts aimed at sustaining the alliance. As Chancellor Bestuzhev proclaimed in the name of Elizabeth:

“Her Majesty must consider such a dispatch as a further very estimable sign of the unchangeable friendship between the two most high Houses, and will not miss any opportunity to return the same to their majesties and to convince the House of Austria of the sincerity of her sentiments.”<sup>38</sup>

Zinzendorf in the compliment to the Grand Duke exclaimed:

“[Their Majesties] are not less pleased by the preference given to them by the friendship of Her Imperial Majesty to be the godparents, and to have attained a new degree of exact connection with the Russian Imperial House.

34 For the texts of the compliments delivered at the solemn audience on 27 April in their original languages and in translations into Russian, see: AVP RI; Fond 32, Opus 1755, Delo 6. The original versions of the three compliments recited by Count Zinzendorf are also copied into one of the volumes of the private archive that Count Esterházy compiled during his stay in Russia (1753–1761), see: MNL-OL, P 218, vol. 13, 59–61.

35 AVP RI, Fond 32, Opus 1, Delo 6, fol. 20v (original in German).

36 AVP RI, Fond 32, Opus 1, Delo 6, fol. 29r (original in German).

37 AVP RI, Fond 32, Opus 1, Delo 6, fol. 32 (original in German).

38 AVP RI, Fond 32, Opus 1, Delo 6, fol. 27r (original in Russian). Noteworthy is that in the German translation in one place the word “Court” was translated to “House”; that is, the friendship was foreseen not (only) as being between the dynasties, but (also) between the courts.

Their desire is nothing so much as to strengthen, increase and perpetuate forever the bond by which these two realms are so happily united.”<sup>39</sup>

The newly born Paul, the godchild of the Austrian Imperial couple, was thus the guarantee of stability of the Russian-Austrian alliance. The Grand Duchess in her answer to Zinzendorf expressed the following hope:

“His Imperial Highness cannot doubt that this prince, when he will follow in the footsteps of his ancestors after reaching a more mature age, and especially when he will fulfil the intentions and orders of the Empress of this monarchy, should not fail to contribute his utmost to the preservation of the happy union of the two empires.”<sup>40</sup>

Third, evidence of the grand-ducal couple's fertility was presented as a guarantee of the perpetuation of the ruling houses' and their courts' friendship. The Habsburg-Lorraine House (as the House of Austria was called after Maria Theresa inherited the patrimony on the basis of Pragmatic Sanction in the female line) knew perfectly well that strength and wealth both in internal affairs and on the international stage depended on numerous healthy progeny. Addressing Catherine, Zinzendorf conveyed:

“Their Majesties fervently wish that the Almighty may preserve this first pledge of common prosperity, and they hope that you, Your Imperial Highness, will increase it by giving birth to other [princes and princesses] as support for the august throne of this power.”<sup>41</sup>

It is interesting that, as late as 1781, when the Grand Duke Paul and his wife Grand Duchess Maria (1759–1828) were travelling through the Austrian Lands, the pupils of the Theresian Academy in Vienna welcomed them with a poem, in which Russian-Austrian relations were presented as a chain of brotherly embraces between monarchs, from Peter the Great and Leopold I to Grand Duke Paul and Joseph II. In conclusion, it was hoped that one day Grand Dukes Alexander (1777–1825) and Constantine (1779–1831) would continue their friendship with the descendants of the Austrian emperor.<sup>42</sup>

### Imperative of reciprocity

Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger rightly points out that means of symbolic communication permit the disguise of actual disagreements and simulate consensus.<sup>43</sup> This is

39 AVP RI, Fond 32, Opis 1, Delo 6, fol. 20 r–v (original in French).

40 AVP RI, Fond 32, Opis 1, Delo 6, fol. 34 (original in French).

41 AVP RI, Fond 32, Opis 1, Delo 6, fol. 21v (original in French).

42 *Freudebezeugung der k. k. vereinigten theresianisch-savoyischen Ritterakademie.*

43 Stollberg-Rilinger, “Symbolische Kommunikation,” 519.

true of mid-century Austrian–Russian relations; the two empires had become close allies despite being antipodes as regards their political cultures and court ceremonials, social composition, the origin of their elites, and their attitudes to their sovereign. Vienna needed Russia with its military potential to be turned against King of Prussia, and did its best to extinguish misunderstandings, satisfy claims, and recruit supporters of the Austrian vector of Russia’s foreign policy among its statesmen and courtiers. Zinzendorf’s mission to St. Petersburg was rich in ambivalent situations when he had to tamp down dissatisfaction or avoid dangerous faux pas.

In the first days of his visit, from talking to Saxon Minister Funk, Zinzendorf learned that Baron Sievers, alongside his official report (which was mainly built around expressions of joy concerning how the embassy had been received in Vienna) complained—through informal channels—to the Empress that Maria Theresa had not danced with him, and that he had not been invited to a ball given by Archduke Joseph.<sup>44</sup> After an investigation, Zinzendorf found out that Count Andrei Alexeevich Bestuzhev (1726–1768), the son of the great chancellor, had been in Vienna in early 1748 to convey congratulations on the occasion of the birth of Archduke Peter Leopold and had been honored by an invitation to a dance with junior arch-duchesses.<sup>45</sup> Yet court etiquette had changed since 1750,<sup>46</sup> and it was for this reason Baron Sievers had not received the same honor.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, Zinzendorf also learned that the father of the young Buturlin was dissatisfied with the fact that his son had received no presents from the Vienna court, and considered it shameful to his dignity. The old Buturlin should have known that the head of the mission, Baron Sievers, had received a portrait of Emperor Francis, and a snuffbox and a ring richly decorated with brilliants from Maria Theresa.<sup>48</sup> Zinzendorf had to explain that presents were not obligatory in the case of extraordinary missions and especially not for their junior members, and that he himself had not received any presents from the court after his stay in Paris. He assured the Russian aristocrat that “[i]t was impossible to imagine that we would have wanted to miss the usual attentions to someone who arrives from Russia.”<sup>49</sup>

44 Letter of Nikolaus Esterházy to Wenzel Anton Kaunitz, St. Petersburg, 10 April 1755, ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Russland II, Kt. 37, Berichte April – Juni 1755, fol. 18r–v (original in German).

45 Dispatch of Count Andrei Bestuzhev-Riumin, Vienna, 5 May 1748, AVP RI, Fond 32, Opis. 1, 1748, Delo 6, fol. 34v.

46 ÖStA, HHStA OMeA ZA-Prot. 22 Zeremonialprotokoll, 1749–1750, fol. 401–408. Cf. Beck, “...aus besonderer Distinction für den russisch[en] kay[serlichen] Hof»,” 119.

47 Cf. Liechtenhan, “Der russische Hof unter Elisabeth Petrovna.”

48 *Aus der Zeit Maria Theresias*, 4, 223–24.

49 Letter of Ludwig Zinzendorf to Wenzel Anton Kaunitz, St. Petersburg, 7 July 1755, ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Russland II, Kt. 37, fol. 29v (original in French).

Another observation of Stollberg-Rilinger is also true of a collision Zinzendorf faced on the eve of the audience at court: symbolic-ritual acts can make potentially divergent interpretations of a particular situation disappear behind a façade of consensus, and those who take part in a collective ritual may testify precisely by their personal participation that they accept the obligatory effects of the ritual, irrespective of what is going on in their mind, and without intentions and effects having been spelled out exactly.<sup>50</sup> The collision Zinzendorf faced was provoked by the ambivalent status of Grand Duke Peter, who was, on the one hand, the heir to the Russian throne, and on the other, as Herzog of Holstein, the vassal of the German Emperor.

In conversation with Funk, Zinzendorf and Esterházy were astonished with the statement of the Saxon minister that the ambassador was to bow one knee in a curtsy before the Empress, and to kiss the hand of the Grand Duke. In preparing for the mission, Zinzendorf had ordered a copy of the report sent to Vienna by Baron Friedrich Wilhelm Kettler (1718–1783), who had visited Russia in 1747 with the notification of the birth of Archduke Peter Leopold and that Elizabeth had been represented by the emperor's brother Karl of Lorraine (1712–1780). Referring to the report and finding there no indication of this inappropriate gesture, both Esterházy and Zinzendorf visited the Great Chancellor on 7 April and were assured again that kissing the Grand Duke's hand had been performed by other Austrian extraordinary envoys. The only explanation Esterházy could find for this demand was that Baron Sievers in Vienna had—on his own initiative—kissed the hand of Archduke Joseph. In his report to Vienna, Esterházy confessed:

“Now we must then leave it open whether the Grand Chancellor's assurance made in this way is true or not. We believe, however, that since Baron Sievers had kissed the hands of His Highness Archduke (even if he had done so himself), the *reciprocum praetendum* would be sought here, and consequently, in order to claim it, all kinds of means and ways would be involved.”<sup>51</sup>

A brilliant solution to this ceremonial collision was found by Grand Duke Peter: when Zinzendorf asked for the grace of kissing his hand, His Imperial Highness embraced the envoy in the most friendly manner and kissed him on the right cheek, eliminating the inconvenience that the emissary might have been forced to show humble obedience to the vassal of his sovereign.<sup>52</sup> This let the ambassador conclude in the report to Count Kaunitz:

50 Stollberg-Rilinger, “Symbolische Kommunikation,” 519.

51 Letter of Nikolaus Esterházy to Wenzel Anton Kaunitz, St. Petersburg, 10 April 1755, ÖStA, HHStA, StA, Russland II, Kt. 37, fol. 16r–v.

52 Letter of Nikolaus Esterházy to Wenzel Anton Kaunitz, St. Petersburg, 29 April 1755, ÖStA, HHStA, StA, Russland II, Kt. 37, fol. 53 r–v.

“Your Excellence should also note that not only the Russian Empress and the Grand Ducal Highnesses received the Count of Zinzendorf with special grace, but that the ceremony was observed up to the Grand Ducal kiss on the hand as with a Royal Envoy Extraordinaire.”<sup>53</sup>

Zinzendorf impressed court society with his independent behavior, free of self-effacing slavishness. Princess Tatiana Golitsyna wrote to her son Alexander:

“He was very handsome and richly dressed. Many people condemned him for being so bold. That means nothing else but the fact that we are all mostly timid. Though noble courage is not honored here.”<sup>54</sup>

### Networking and analytics

Alongside his official mission of celebrating the birth of the heir to the Russian throne, Ludwig von Zinzendorf, as Kaunitz’s trustee, had secret assignments: to investigate why cooperation between Ambassador Esterházy and Chancellor Bestuzhev had failed to the extent that it was affecting the sustainment of bilateral relations, and to obtain information about the Danish plans to exchange Holstein, the forthcoming election of the king in Poland, and tensions with the Porte that had arisen from the erection of a fortress in the so called New Serbia settlement.<sup>55</sup> In fact, Esterházy had fallen victim to the negative opinion of him formed by the chancellor’s brother Mikhail Petrovich Bestuzhev-Riumin years earlier in Dresden, where they had both diplomatically represented their courts in the middle of the 1740s.<sup>56</sup> The first months and years in the Russian capital had turned into a disaster for Esterházy, who had been demonstratively neglected by the chief of the Russian diplomatic service, who otherwise claimed to be the most devoted friend of the Vienna Court. Later, the chancellor would say to Zinzendorf that Their Majesties “should not consider him only as the well-intended minister of an ally, but as the Austrian minister at the Russian court.”<sup>57</sup>

Zinzendorf’s primary informant became Johann Funk, who was well-versed in intrigue and a confidant of the great chancellor. After a short while, the count was almost as well, if not better, informed about the main protagonists at Court than Esterházy, and about the delicate balance between the increasingly isolated

53 Letter of Nikolaus Esterházy to Wenzel Anton Kaunitz, St. Petersburg, 29 April 1755, ÖStA, HHStA, StA, Russland II, Kt. 37, fol. 54 r–v.

54 Letter of Tatiana Golitsyna to Alexandre Golitzyn, St. Petersburg, 29(18) April 1755, “Iz semeinnoi khroniki roda Golitsynykh,” 19.

55 “Die Selbstbiographie,” 62 f.

56 Shchepkin, *Russko-avstriiskii soiuz*, 150.

57 “Zinzendorfs ‘Mémoire sur la Russie, sur l’impératrice, sa cour et son gouvernement,’” 685.

chancellor and the dominant party, and the actual strength of pro-Prussian sentiment and sympathy for the Vienna Court, as well as about trade, finances, and the army. His wittiness and personal charm won over Chancellor Bestuzhev and his secretary Dmitry Vasilievich Volkov (1727–1785); Vice-Chancellor Vorontsov; favorite Ivan Ivanovich Shuvalov (1727–1797) and his cousin, influential senator and quasi-first minister Peter Ivanovich Shuvalov (1711–1762); Cabinet-Secretary Adam Vasilievich Olsufiev; and General Georg Lieven (1696–1763), amongst many others.

After the official mission of delivering the congratulation letters was completed, Zinzendorf spent time visiting the influential courtiers and first dignitaries of the Russian state or travelling around the city's environs. Ambitious Petr Shuvalov gave a banquet which impressed the envoy: “[He] gave us a wonderful meal. The dessert was served in a newly finished grotto decorated with fountains.”<sup>58</sup> Another day, Zinzendorf, accompanied by Shuvalov, visited the cadet corps: “I was surprised by the progress of this academy. They teach very well up to law [...] They are learning German and French.”<sup>59</sup> Empress Elizabeth spent a longer while talking to him at court events: “She spoke to me with a touch of kindness that was truly delightful,” he wrote to Kaunitz. Ambassador Esterházy also gave a masked ball: guests sitting around 20 tables were served oranges and refreshing drinks or walked in the garden under the sun of the white nights.

Zinzendorf's stay in St. Petersburg coincided with the final stage of the negotiations between Russia and Great Britain on the renewal of the subsidy conventions of 1747. To fix the final arrangements, the new British minister at the Russian Court, Sir Charles Williams (1708–1759), had arrived in Russia and entered into a secret deal with Zinzendorf. The idea was to leave Nikolaus Esterházy in complete ignorance of the negotiations with Bestuzhev in order to protect the ambassador's reputation in case of failure. During one of his regular talks in confidence with the great chancellor, Zinzendorf dropped the idea of offering generous regular payments to the key figures of the dominant party at court to secure their pro-Austrian orientation. The idea was supported by the otherwise cautious Bestuzhev, and Zinzendorf felt his mission to be complete. The project would end in early 1756 when news of the Anglo-Prussian alliance shocked both the Russian Court and Ambassador Esterházy, who would be unable to explain to Empress Elizabeth what was going on. At the time of his visit though, Zinzendorf could assure his patron in Vienna, Chancellor Kaunitz, that Prussia had no strong support in St. Petersburg, and that the Russian elite cherished and valued friendship with Vienna.

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58 Letter of Ludwig von Zinzendorf to Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz, St. Petersburg, 29 May 1755, ÖStA, HHStA, SABt, Russland II, Kt. 37, fol. 15v (original in French).

59 Letter of Ludwig von Zinzendorf to Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz, St. Petersburg, 3 June 1755, ÖStA, HHStA, SABt, Russland II, Kt. 37, fol. 18r (original in French).



## Disease and duty

The notoriously harsh climate of the Russian capital had always been more than a theme in early modern diplomatic correspondence. By the time Ludwig Zinzendorf arrived in St. Petersburg, Ambassador Esterházy was impatiently waiting for the end of his mission. Before coming to Russia, he had served as the ambassador to the Court of Madrid in 1751, and had nearly been taken to the grave by a severe and exhausting stomach disease which had prevented him from signing a treaty with Spain. After his early return with the mission aborted, Maria Theresa in 1753 suggested a deal to Esterházy: he was to go to the Russian Court and represent the Empire and the House of Austria for three years; after that he would be given an honorable position at the Court in Vienna. The three years were to end only in the autumn of 1756, but Esterházy, whose body was already afflicted with stomach cramps, hemorrhoids, and podagra, did not miss an opportunity to give a reminder of the urgency of recalling him back to Vienna via Carlsbad (with its healing mineral waters).<sup>60</sup> Esterházy's physical suffering touched the heart of Empress Elizabeth to such an extent that she placed her physicians Pavel Kondoidi (1710–1760) and Abraham Kaau-Boerhaave (1715–1758) at the diplomat's disposal and invited Esterházy to spend the summer months at her manor house in Strelna, near St. Petersburg, which had mineral springs nearby.

Upon his arrival in St. Petersburg, Count Ludwig von Zinzendorf was so tired and haggard with hemorrhoidal paroxysms, back pains, and spots on his feet that he was forced to request a postponement of the audience.<sup>61</sup> Esterházy called Boerhaave, and the doctor, who was notoriously deaf, amazed Zinzendorf by communicating with patients via an assistant 'speaking' sign language. The continental climate, with its freezing cold nights in late March, ice thaw in April, and white nights when the sun did not go below the horizon in June, depressed rather than impressed the envoy, and he expected to leave Russia after the widely advertised solemn celebration of the birth of Grand Duke Paul, which Esterházy had already been preparing for months. Yet the celebration was postponed because of the sickness of Empress Elizabeth, and Zinzendorf—after a farewell audience with short harangues in the same manner as three months ago—left Russia for Vienna on 26 July 1755 via Sweden and Denmark, the northern countries whose economies and political systems he wanted to learn about through personal observation. During the farewell audience, he received the recredentials with the following lines:

60 Khavanova, "Telesnye nedugi i sluzhebnye obiazannosti."

61 Letter of Ludwig von Zinzendorf to Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz, St. Petersburg, 18 April 1755. ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Russland II, Kt. 37, fol. 9r–v (original in French).

“I have much esteemed both the former and the new experiences of Your friendship, and I am most anxious about this most intimate spiritual union with Your Imperial Majesty, of which and of my most sincere friendship to Your Majesty I have opened up to Count Zinzendorf, who by his laudable behaviour at my court has earned my special recommendation to Your Majesty.”<sup>62</sup>

In the meanwhile, Esterházy fell more severely ill again, and sent a courier to Kaunitz with a request to let him travel to Carlsbad owing to the persistent demands of the doctors, and to send Zinzendorf back to St. Petersburg to take over his functions at the Russian Court. The courier from Vienna was able to intercept Zinzendorf in Stockholm and deliver a decree dated 16 September ordering his immediate return to the Russian capital. Zinzendorf decided to make the journey shorter and travel by sea, and on 3 October 1755 informed Esterházy of this from Hamburg. To his greatest surprise, the envoy soon received a letter from the ambassador assuring him that his condition had improved and that there was no reason to return to Russia. The desperate Zinzendorf was haunted by doubts over whether he should wait for further instructions, or rush to the physically suffering Esterházy, despite his assurance that there was no longer any such need: “What would have been my despair, however, what excuse would I have had to say to myself, if [...] a new violent attack on Messier Esterhasi had caused some delay in business?”<sup>63</sup>

Zinzendorf reappeared in St. Petersburg on 5 November, much to the surprise of the court. Meanwhile, Esterházy, who was feeling better again, tried to make his return as invisible to the public as possible, asking Chancellor Bestuzhev to arrange a passport for Zinzendorf:

“[...] to come here quietly from Kronstadt, and since his unexpected return would at the same time cause a great stir, I intend to accommodate him in my house, so that he can then start his return journey quietly from here in a few days' time, without presenting himself to anyone.”<sup>64</sup>

In those days, the ambassador was much preoccupied with the preparations for the two promised masked balls for the top court society and for the public of the imperial capital. He was proud of Empress Elizabeth's attendance and expected another solemn ceremony: one for the delivery of the Order of St. Andreas, the latter

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62 Copy of the letter of Empress Elisabeth to Emperor Francis I, AVP RI, Fond 32, Opis 1, 1755, Delo 1, fol. 1r–2v (original in Russian).

63 Letter of Ludwig von Zinzendorf to Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz, St. Petersburg, 11 November 1755, ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Russland II, Kt. 37, fol. 52v (original in French).

64 Letter of Nikolaus Esterházy to Aleksei Bestuzhev-Riumin, St. Petersburg, 20 (9) October 1755, AVP RI, Fond 32, Opis 1, 1755, Delo 5, fol. 66v (original in German).

which he attended together with Zinzendorf. (Esterházy became the last Austrian diplomat to receive this honorary decoration in the eighteenth century.) Count Ludwig von Zinzendorf finally left Russia in the last days of December 1755.

## Balance sheet

The mission to St. Petersburg remained just an episode in the career of Count Ludwig von Zinzendorf. The large-scale reforms of the administration and finances conducted in the Habsburg lands in the early 1760s on the initiative of Kaunitz demonstrated the outstanding intellectual capacity and diverse experience of his trainee and confidant. Their letter exchange from 1755 testifies to their warm feelings towards one other, Zinzendorf's pride in the high esteem, and Kaunitz's trust in his younger colleague's potential. Later on, the latter found it appropriate to include into his biographical sketch lines from Kaunitz's letter: "I don't think I need to remind you that I am still your guarantor, but it is important for me to remind you that I love you."<sup>65</sup> In principle, Ludwig von Zinzendorf might have gone on with a diplomatic career, but, like many fellow aristocrats, he lacked the firm financial background which would have allowed him to make diplomacy his true vocation.<sup>66</sup> As to the possibility of returning to Russia in the character of the extraordinary and plenipotential ambassador, as Nikolaus Esterházy put it in one of the reports:

"The one who has already been here in a lesser character, when he then assumes a higher one, cannot easily obtain the necessary first great impression and reputation at the court here. [...] These observations and remarks would certainly not take place at another court, but here they may well deserve more attention."<sup>67</sup>

The brief and extensive accounts of Zinzendorf's stay in Russia written for Kaunitz demonstrate his outstanding analytical capacity in terms of processing new information, his sociability, and his talent for winning over people. He correctly estimated the balance of power between the chancellor and the dominant party at Court, and he came to the conclusion that the key figures of the Russian government

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65 "Die Selbstbiographie," 65 (original in French).

66 Kaunitz, who as early as 1751 envisaged that Ludwig von Zinzendorf—in a short while—might become an able minister ("un Ministre habile") and did not exclude the possibility of sending him to Turin (this position would be then filled by Florimund Mercy d'Argenteau), recognized that he had no possessions and would need financial support at the start. See: Letter of Kaunitz to Ignaz von Koch, Fontainebleau, 24 October 1751, in: *Correspondance Secrète*, 140.

67 Letter of Nikolaus Esterházy to Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz, St. Petersburg, 26 June 1756, MNL-OL-P 218, vol. 14, p. 77.

had no pro-Prussian sentiment and were often eager to be sustained or bribed by the Court of Vienna. On the eve of the Seven Years' War, Zinzendorf outlined the core problem the allied armies would face in joint warfare:

“In the present situation, this state could not sustain very long wars abroad, and all the powers which will need its alliance, which will want to make act in their favor these innumerable armies, must count that, without proportionate subsidies, it will be something beyond their forces.”<sup>68</sup>

St. Petersburg and Vienna had been exchanging missions since 1746: first, when Francis of Lorraine was elected German Emperor (1746); second, on the birth of Archduke Peter Leopold (1747); and third, on the birth of Grand Duke Paul (1755). Each of the three were significant events in court life, and they were reflected in periodicals and left traces in correspondence and memoirs. In this respect, Zinzendorf's trip to Russia coincided with the zenith of the bilateral alliance, strengthened as it was by spiritual kinship via the mutual godparenthood of the ruling houses. As the envoy of the imperial ruling couple, he succeeded in representing the House of Austria as the principal ally of Russia, reduced the tension between Ambassador Esterházy and Chancellor Bestuzhev, and ensured tight Austrian–British–Russian cooperation in preparation for the coming war. It was not his fault that the approaching reversal of alliances in early 1756<sup>69</sup> would collapse the St. Petersburg–London axis of international policy. After 1755, as belligerent allies, and after 1762, with the dissolution of the alliance, the courts would maintain the tradition of mission-exchange, though the conditions of war and the aggravating contradictions would make such visits in the future much more modest.

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69 See for example: Schilling, *Kaunitz und das Renversement des Alliances*.

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