

**A Century of The Russian Ministry of War
1802-1902
General Staff Historical Department
The Reign of Emperor Alexander I
1801 - 1805**

[translated into English from the original Russian by Peter G.A. Phillips]



8. On The Submission Of The Military Commission's "Notes."

The Military Commission, according to its report, given Supreme Approval on 21 September [3 October], 1801,¹ would require the delivery of data from the Quartermaster General and from government offices. This data was necessary "in order to have the most accurate and thorough consideration of the various elements of the organisation and maintenance of the forces." The Commission demanded the following information: "regarding various nationalities; about the factors affecting the Caucasus, Orenburg and Siberia lines about the treatment of the ethnic groups adjacent to them; regarding topographic depictions and town plans, regarding situational maps and regarding plans for all fortresses."

As a result, the Military Commission received Notes in "various formats,"² of which the most interesting and essential in order to clarify the issues of organisation and deployment of forces at the beginning of the reign of Emperor Alexander I, are the following pair:

1. "A piece on the disposition of forces according to Inspections," compiled by Major General Rusanov [Ivan Ivanovich Rusanov],³ for which he received Supreme Favour.
2. Reasoning by engineer and Quartermaster General van Sukhtelen about the necessity for strengthening the army and "a concept in the event of a wartime *opolchenie*."

The 'Piece' and 'Reasoning' served as starting points for the Commission for the development of various issues closely related to the organisation of forces and with the consideration of an advantageous schedule for the army by Inspection. In view of the serious significance of these sources, we consider it necessary to cite them in full, since they represent, to a greater or lesser extent, as it were, a set of mobilisation considerations relating to the beginning of the last century.

1 Archive of the War Chancellery, Notes on 1st Supreme Decrees etc, Book No. 138, Listing No. 19.

2 A note forwarded by T.S. Troitsinsky.

3 A note forwarded by T.S. Troitsinsky. Letter from Count Lieven to Major General Rusanov dated 16 [28] May 1802, No. 636.

9. Major General Rusanov's 'Piece' And Conclusions On The 'Piece.'⁴

"If it please the Sovereign Emperor, in the decree given to the Military Commission on their directive, I have the pleasure of prioritising these subjects, among others:

Determining the number of troops and their general deployment. The establishment of military forces in all States is based on the need to guard against external threats and the preservation of internal order, and therefore, in determining the number of troops, it must take into account the situation on the borders, the forces of other powers and the extent of the Empire.

Considering all the factors pertaining to this subject, much data would be needed, whose analysis would delay decisions for a very long time that are vital for the number of troops that are needed at least for the essential defence of the borders.

So, without waiting for all the other detailed data on this subject, it is enough to know that the vast Russian Empire has its borders, to the north with the ocean; to the west with Norway, Sweden and the Baltic Sea, with Prussia, Austria and European Turkey; to our six o'clock with the Black Sea, the Kuban river, Persia, Asiatic Turkey, separated by those living in the Caucasus mountain, descendants of the Tatar hordes, the Caspian Sea, the Kyrgyz Kazak tribes and, from the Irtysh to the Sea of Okhotsk, with Chinese territory; to the east, it has the Aleutian and Kuril Islands, which lie on the Eastern Ocean.

Judging from our political experience with these neighbouring peoples, it is improbable that all of them would suddenly take up arms; in such a dubious event, it would be necessary to resort to the entire national *opolchenie*: since Austria, Prussia, Turkey, and Persia could put together a million soldiers without straining their forces; but since the interests of these powers are divergent, it can never happen that Prussia will mobilise at the same time as Russia is in breach with Austria, or that Persia would get involved in hostilities, when Turkey is at war with Russia. The interests of the German states will always prevent the unification of Austria with Prussia, and since Persia and Turkey are also divided by the schism in Islam, consequently, the defence of the frontiers facing these opposing powers should lie more in the care of the Ministry and political diplomacy than in the strength of the military and *opolchenie*.

Quite different factors are found in a discussion on war with the Ottoman Porte. This power will not forget the blows dealt to it in the last century for a long time: and for however long they strive for revenge, Sweden, not fearing interference from the Danes, will remain allied to them and will always direct the attention of the powerful, on their part, to attack by land and sea. While the Tatar tribes living beyond the Kuban and in the Caucasian towns will forever remain more dangerous for Russia than the Albanians and other Greek peoples, committed to Russia by common faith, are for the Porte; at the slightest incitement to jihad, at the slightest weakening of military forces, or more restraint on this stretch of the border, these mongrels living in the mountains will be able to streak like lightning across all the lowlands. A mountain horse, content with grazing alone, can cover a hundred *versts* a day; a mountain horseman can live for a whole week on one handful of millet. Could anything not be expected from such desperate peoples, who, of course, can be counted in the mountains at no less than a million, if through some false prophet they are brought into unity and if they once succeed in overcoming the guard on the line of forces?⁵ Assuming a constant need to keep the Russian ground forces ready for defence against the Ottoman Porte and Sweden, and adding to this the reliable protection of all lines and borders, such that, in the event of such a war, not only do they not remain denuded of troops, but even then they constitute a respectable observational corps, to monitor the movements of other neighbouring powers; one must go back to the era when Russia had been subjected to this inevitable war, and draw information from them as to what extent the field army should reach.

4 Archive of the War Chancellery, Notes on 1st Supreme Decrees etc, Book No. 138, Listing No. 51. Spelling has preserved only in some places, for ease of reading, footnotes have been inserted and italics added.

5 Such a prophet did appear there, but fortunately he was soon captured and thus peace was restored once more.

The year 1796 must rightly be taken as the measure, because that was when the partitions of Poland were finally completed and the field forces were supposed to be equal to the needs of defence against external threats and, accordingly, with the length of the new frontier; it would not be improper to note here briefly that, according to the provisions made at the time, that it was necessary for the next year for the army to consist of 307 battalions and 391 squadrons, or 405,000 men,⁶ excluding the Lifeguard, garrisons and irregular troops. The army was indeed numerous, but *not extraordinarily so* in terms of the extent of the Empire, because the need to maintain such a number came from an actual calculation of war with one of the powerful neighbours, such as the Porte, against whom a manoeuvre force of 200,000 men was necessary, and 100,000 in observational corps, which is acknowledged as advantageous to concentrate in appropriate locations, in addition, 10,000 at any time for the protection of the Crimea, 25,000 for the Caucasus line and the Kuban, and 25,000 for the Siberia and Orenburg lines, while 45,000 in case of a breach of the peace with the Swedes, both for land operations and for the rowing fleet; now, with the acquisition of Georgia, perhaps even a few more battalions of infantry would have to be added depending on the situation at the time. There were 30,555 foot and horse artillerymen on top of the field army at the time, and some 80,000 regular and irregular Cossacks, not including the Lifeguard, which is the Tsar's own army and is used in campaigns when He is present with them in person, or in the event of a war close to the capital.

Such an estimate, it seems, stemmed not only from political considerations, but also from natural factors. The Crimean Turks, and Swedes of Livonia and Estland, the defeated, always remember (and always will) and, if the opportunity arises, they will begin to return; the influence of foreign powers on a war with the Porte, although it might happen, nevertheless, if France were to assist them, then Britain would counterbalance it, if Austria were to support them, then Prussia would begin to object; or vice versa, France versus Britain, or Austria would interfere against Prussia. And as the execution of this policy has been rooted for a whole century, the accession to this or that alliance, to whichever can deliver greatest advantage, is a consequence arising from the provisions of the Ministry. And the primary objective of that political precaution is that, lest by inciting war suddenly from all or from many of its neighbours, the State should not be subject to irrevocable disaster, or, so to speak, not to bring it on by one's own commitments, that is, by an effort to expand or hold on to areas whose defence exceeds the strength of the nation and the possibility of domestic advantages, and to which nature itself has often drawn boundaries.

But even if it is possible to determine a means of moving forces in accordance with apparent need, to be done decisively, however, it should not be ignored that the most important part of the defence resides directly in the fortresses, the more widespread the boundaries of the State the more vital they are. Strong fortresses built in decent locations often constitute the most important obstacle in invasion attempts, a check on enemy operations and lost time, whose gain in sometimes unfavourable circumstances should be considered a great good fortune. Not every fortress can be scorned by the enemy and have some gaggle of men left to lie around it. A strong garrison, consisting of not just infantry alone, but also of cavalry, bold, enterprising, with a skilful commandant, will often cause great harm with sorties and independent operations, and, by cutting enemy supply lines, can destroy their entire Army, while the field force, although retreating, will draw them into devastated, barren places, in which they will find illness and death instead of a place of victory. This is how the French defended themselves when the Austrian and Prussian Army entered their borders: the fortresses were their defence, and the commanding general, with weak strength, was given the convenience of such manoeuvres, by which the enemy was brought to exhaustion and forced to retreat with significant losses. Consequently, fortresses are no less important pillars both for the defence of the borders of the State, and for the preservation of internal

6 Note: this is referring to the reign of Empress Catherine, who, in her final years made extensive plans for military operations against France... The accession to the throne of Emperor Paul I "averted the spread of the flames of war" and "a burgeoning army." Decree dated 18 [29] December 1797, Complete Collection of Laws, Vol. XXIV, No. 18278.

order, while moreover, they always serve as assembly areas for the army and are reliable for stockpiling and storing various munitions. There are almost no such fortresses in Russia. If those conquered from the Swedes are considered fortresses, then these had their best defences facing away from the direction of attack; those built on the steppes have the only distinction that the nomadic peoples, who do not have artillery, are incapable of attacking them.

But neither the importance of the fortresses, nor the strength of forces are able to contribute to the direct success of their use, unless they are assisted by strong and well-served artillery, which can often make a small territorial militia terrifying and irresistible. Therefore, numerous and well-served artillery should be the third pillar both of a reliable defence of the State and in an offensive war. It would be superfluous to describe its role here, as everyone knows which weapons it should consist of and what effect they have. But it would not be unseemly to mention only that it is much more useful that regimental guns are always with the regiments, so that the men fully understand the capabilities and benefits of their operation. In former times, dragoon regiments, having one gun in each squadron, which could act simultaneously both as horse artillery *and as powerful infantry*.

Furthermore, in accordance with the situation on the borders and the methods of internal economy of the forces, it seems useful and necessary to establish a strong territorial militia, which will be beneficial for the state, since its maintenance would be cheaper than field forces. The Siberia, Orenburg, Caucasus and Kuban lines, as well as Crimea and even Finland, may be guarded by static forces. As a result of this the field Army proper, decreasing in those places to 50,000 men and not requiring an increase in its maintenance, would multiply the number of field troops on other more important frontiers. Populations such as this could be formed as in the newly acquired part of Poland, referred to as the Okolitsa [beyond the pale] by their nobility and czynsz [leaseholders], also on land which does not belong to anyone, and whom are estimated to be some 377,338 people. These classes of people, not owning their own land, do not bring any benefit to themselves or the State, while upon being provided with land, they will at least render service from it, and be self-sufficient with provisions. But such settlements should not be established hastily, but by first preparing dwellings for the settlers, ploughing the land and sowing grain, so that they would not become prey to famine instead of repulsing the enemy. Settlement by retired soldiers is equally useful.⁷ A numerous territorial militia, if necessary, could make up twice the strength of the Army. It is only necessary to select and assign decent locations, which, assuming the benefits for the State, cannot be lacking. And if it emerged that the state-owned lands had all been distributed, then others could be granted in exchange, if these were uninhabited. For with such settlements, the following benefits to the state are combined in a single object:

1. Free or very cheap maintenance of the Army in peacetime.
2. Settlement of uninhabited locations.
3. Expansion of arable farming, cattle breeding and cottage industry.
4. Benefits derived from population expansion.
5. Some recompense for the losses that Poland has cost Russia for thirty years.
6. The draining of those swampy locations on which standing troops are constantly exposed to disease and death itself from incessant putrid fumes, as, for example, at the mouth of Labe and in other poorly inhabited and uncultivated places.⁸

But as this establishment of the territorial militia, although it could constitute an important state force and power, cannot be executed immediately, then until such time as it can, it will be useful to deploy the Army in accordance with the following schedule, applying the present strength of the

⁷ Many other kinds of people can join the territorial militia without resettlement. But inasmuch as this is moving away from the actual proposition described, then it could be done exceptionally.

⁸ If the establishment of the territorial militia proceeds through Supreme Approval, then a special project could be initiated to collect some information (there is no such project on file).

field force, inasmuch as the present disposition does not correspond either to appropriate communications between forces, or to their advantageous provisioning, and it was done in haste simply to extract the troops from their former cramped deployment, namely:

1. In North Russia, or St Petersburg Inspection, whose left wing should link up with Courland, and the right wing with Finland, with its forces occupying the governorates of: St Petersburg, Novgorod, Pskov, Olonets, Livland and Estland, is to consist of the Lifeguard, 30 battalions of infantry and ten squadrons of cavalry, which, if needed, can immediately support the Lithuania or Finland inspections.⁹
2. In the Lithuania Inspection, whose right wing must occupy Courland, and with the left stretching to Brest-Litovsk in order to occupy the entire frontier with Prussia, and merges here with the neighbouring inspection aligned with the borders of Austria, having: 39 battalions of infantry, 20 squadrons of heavy cavalry and two Don Cossack regiments.
3. In the Krasnorussia Inspection, that is, in Volhynia, and in what has been known since ancient times as Black Russia, with the right wing at Brest-Litovsk, linking with the Lithuania Inspection, stretches on the left to Kamenets-Podolsky: 42 battalions of infantry and 40 squadrons of cavalry.
4. In the Novorossia Inspection, with its right wing at Kamenets-Podolsky, linking with the Krasnorussia Inspection, its left wing stretches along the Turkish Border to the Liman between Ochakov and Kinburn, and in the Podolia and Novorossia governorates and in other adjacent locations are to be: 42 infantry battalions and 60 cavalry battalions.

Note: The centre of these frontiers, that is, the Krasnorussia Inspection, if necessary, is to support both adjacent inspections with cavalry and infantry and is to receive reinforcements from the internal inspections.

5. In the Crimea or Taurida Inspection, should a dedicated inspection be assigned, although it is more convenient to combine it with Novorossia, because in the matter of defence it has the same neighbour, 12 battalions and three Don regiments are sufficient, together with the addition of the Polish gentry, whom it is appropriate to settle in the Crimea, it is more important to depend on the capability of the Black Sea Fleet for the defence of the Crimea for the present.
6. In the Malorussia or Kiev Inspection, which should function as a reserve for border inspections, and may be located both in Kiev and in Malorussia and Sloboda governorates, 30 infantry battalions and 20 cavalry squadrons.
7. In the Belorussia Inspection, which may be located in the Smolensk, Minsk, Vitebsk and Mogilev governorates with 18 battalions and ten squadrons, in order to support the Lithuania and Krasnorussia inspections.
8. In the Greater Russia or Moscow Inspection, which may be located in the Moscow, Tver, Orël, Ryazan, Tambov, Voronezh and Saratov governorates, with 36 battalions and 30 squadrons, which, if necessary, may move into the Malorussia and Belorussia inspections.
9. In the Siberia Inspection, 12 battalions, five squadrons and two Don Cossack regiments, whom it is appropriate to settle there.
10. In the Orenburg Inspection, nine battalions and five squadrons.
11. In the Caucasus Inspection, 18 battalions and 20 squadrons.

⁹ The names of inspections were extracted from the full title of the Great Autocrat of All Russia. Including, as written, Greater Russia, Malorussia, Belorussia and Krasnorussia, while North Russia was named after the founder of Northern Russia, Peter the Great. However, the location of the inspection is aligned with the location of the borders. Their naming now, as ever, depends on the Supreme Power.

12. In the Finland Inspection, 15 battalions and 500 Cossacks.¹⁰

Moreover, in accordance with the disposition of the inspections and fortresses contained within them, the field army is to be supported, if necessary, by 87 garrison battalions, which, however, must be placed more in accordance with the local situation, and which, by increasing the number of men per company, may equal the previous 104 garrison battalions which existed before 1798; not included here are the Tatar and Poland horse and Chuguev Cossack regiments, as well as replacement squadrons for all cavalry regiments, which increases the strength of the cavalry by 74 squadrons.¹¹ But if the regular cavalry regiments are composed, following their old establishment, then they can generate more than this number of better cavalry and at lesser cost.

Thus, having found the required measure for the composition and strength of the cavalry and infantry, it is necessary to carefully consider: what numbers should exist for both horse and foot artillery. If we calculate regimental artillery by the number of battalions, then six guns are required for each regiment, that is, two for each battalion, namely 303 six-pounder cannon and the same number of 12-pounder licorns, and from their total, the appropriate number of artillerymen; Three-pounder guns and eight-pounder licorns may only be left on the Siberia, Orenburg and Caucasus lines, while in other locations, due to their small calibre in relation to enemy guns, no success might be expected from their operation.

Horse Artillery is very useful, but expensive; if at least ten regiments of dragoons were given two guns per squadron, then 50 six-pounder guns and a similar number of twelve-pounder licorns should leave the cavalry in excellent condition. In order to achieve this it is necessary to add artillerymen to Dragoon regiments.

In fact, for Horse Artillery, whose operations are most useful on open and level terrain, 12 companies or three battalions are sufficient, which may be kept for use by the three border inspections: Lithuania, Krasnorussia and Novorussia. As for the field artillery, for every reason it is impossible to have fewer than 600 guns: 120 for Lithuania, 120 for Krasnorussia, 120 for Novorussia, 60 for Finland,¹² ten for Siberia, ten for Orenburg, 20 for the Caucasus and in reserve 120 guns in the North Russia or St Petersburg and Great Russia or Moscow inspections. They must be provided with superior equipment in comparison with that held by their neighbours, in terms of calibre, design, durability of the alloys, and their agility in action.

It is inappropriate to determine the number of siege artillery, otherwise than the assumption of a siege of any two important fortresses at the same time. The location of the fortresses and the assault should determine the number of siege weapons, and from them the number of artillerymen, which, however, are better calculated at battalion strength. Prior to 1798, all the artillery was included in one bombardier, two gunner and two fusilier regiments, each of 12 companies; the four artillery bombardier battalions were each of six companies, five companies of horse artillery, which, however, was intended to be increased to ten companies, one miner, one pioneer and one engineer company, and in the garrison artillery sub-units 8,736 men, while in the entire Artillery, including support personnel, 39,091 men.

The disposition of the entire artillery, including that of the fortresses, must correspond to the disposition of forces according to inspection and the locally convenient towns and fortresses. The engineers, the General Staff or the column commanders, the stores of the Commissariat, Artillery and Provisioning Department, are to be equally distributed for the troop locations, and the numbers of all officials belonging to them for the total of the entire land force *opolchenie*.

10 Note: It has been previously stated that there were 14 inspections, this does not contradict the listing of 12 inspections in 'Piece' since Major General Ruzanov was expressing only his thoughts and assumptions.

11 Note: The replacement squadrons, according to their status, did not go on campaign, and therefore the increase to the cavalry was only relative, since the replacement squadrons only supported the reconstitution of the active squadrons of the regiment.

12 Note: Overall, General Rusanov considered it necessary to have 480 guns on the western borders (including 60 guns in reserve in the St Petersburg Inspection) or $\frac{2}{3}$ of the field artillery.

Finally, the internal administration of inspections on the requirements for rations for the troops, clothing and fodder, as well as on the subject of command over all units and troop types in a single inspection, in the discussion of many factors, for example, of unfavourable quartering locations occurring between military personnel and villagers, quarrels and disputes and other unforeseen hazards where decisiveness is needed and that cannot tolerate slowness or delay, demands that each inspection should have a dedicated *General Officer Commanding* for all forces in the inspection, regardless of existing inspectors, whom, by the permission of the Sovereign Emperor, will be established *in order to supervise*,¹³ such that the troops are unceasingly in perfect order in everything related to good order and their maintenance.

This is perhaps the end of the first article of the Supreme Decree, on determining the number of troops in relation to the defence of the borders from external threats, and the methods in pursuance of this, they will also be appropriate to those provisions that are necessary for maintaining internal order, and will eventually lead to the fulfilment of other instructions contained in that decree, one after the other in their order.

In the explanation of the political position of the powers neighbouring Russia, the Chinese Empire has been omitted because it has no influence on the general affairs of European politics and, having existed in the same situation for several centuries, it has no concerns other than to preserve its ancient institutions in unchanging integrity, refusing not only to expand their frontiers, but also the arts and sciences themselves.

Major General Rusanov.”

Thus, in the Piece by General Rusanov we find the following observations:

1. The field army should number no fewer than 444,000 men, composed of 405,000 infantry and cavalry with a further 39,000 artillerymen. In addition, the Lifeguard should be counted at about 12,000 men, while regular and irregular Cossacks, as they are referred to in Piece, some 80,000 men.
2. “The present disposition” of the Army, as it states in Piece, “does not correspond either to appropriate communications between forces, or to their advantageous provisioning, and it was done in haste simply to extract the troops from their former cramped deployment.”¹⁴ This largely explains the distribution of the Army across the extent of the Empire. And so, the following were considered for force deployment:
 - a) Appropriate communications between forces.
 - b) Their advantageous provisioning.
 - c) The requirement for locations to be considered with regard to the distance from the borders, to which they might arrive in time, on first demand.¹⁵
3. The disposition of troops given by General Rusanov into inspections did not correspond to reality, he referred to 12 inspections, while there were 14; but overall this disposition bears a passing resemblance to the Schedule of Troops issued in July 1801.¹⁶ It should be noted that in Piece we find an indication as to why the Lifeguard was listed separately, outside the inspections, the Lifeguard “is the Tsar’s own army and is used in campaigns when He is present with them in person, or in the event of a war close to the capital.”
4. The artillery is divided into regimental (two guns per battalion) and field artillery. At the

13 We draw attention to the original instruction: in a single inspection there is to be both a “dedicated commanding general” and an inspector *in order to supervise*...

14 Here, it mentions obscurely, probably, about the former preparations to break off relations with Britain at the end of 1800 and at the beginning of 1801.

15 We have encountered this requirement in the above-mentioned note dated 10 [22] July, 1801, but in Piece this idea is expressed only partially.

16 Complete Collection of Laws, Vol. XXVI, No. 19951. See [Diagram1](#).

same time, it was stated “that it is much more useful for regimental guns to always be with the regiments.”¹⁷ It was proposed that horse artillery be kept in the three (western) border inspections, while locations for the rest of the artillery are in accordance with the disposition of troops in inspections and the local availability of fortresses and cities.

5. With regard to the administration of inspections, the following is stated: “each inspection should have a dedicated *General Officer Commanding* for all forces in the inspection, regardless of existing inspectors, whom, by the permission of the Sovereign Emperor, will be established *in order to supervise*, such that the troops are unceasingly in perfect order in everything related to good order and their maintenance.”
6. There are no indications of the division of the army of 200,000 men into any smaller formations,¹⁸ but presumably it can be said that these formations were considered corps, confirmation is found in the assignment of 100,000 men to observation corps in the event of a war with the Ottoman Porte.

17 Cases are given below of attaching artillery to regiments (see Corps columns under General-of-Cavalry Baron Bennigsen and General-of-Infantry Count Buxhoeveden in 1805).

18 In considering the new artillery provisions, it will be mentioned that such a division had in fact been introduced.