



Nikolai Passek

After the departure of Ungern-Sternberg, Nikolai Gavrilovich Matiunin was appointed to the Melbourne consulate, but owing to ill health he was unable to take up the position. In July 1899, without having reached Australia, he was relieved of his duties. On 29 August (OS) 1899, Nikolai Pompeyevich Passek was appointed Russian consul.¹ He left St Petersburg in February 1900 for Odessa, and from there sailed for Suez, and thence on the French steamer *Australien* to Melbourne, where he arrived at the very end of March, after a short stay in Adelaide. When the Australian press announced his arrival, a brief profile appeared: ‘Although he has never previously visited Australia Mr Passek is acquainted with our system of Government and politics. The Consul is a typical Russian and speaks several languages.’²

Nikolai Passek was born on 15 November (OS) 1850 into a landowning family in Kharkov. Having received his basic education at home, he was sent by his parents to King’s College in London, to improve his English. He then received his higher education at Moscow University, from which he graduated in 1874. From there, he went to work in the auditing office in Kharkov. He joined the Foreign Ministry in January 1876 and was attached to its Asian desk, but soon left to work in private enterprise. At the age of nearly fifty, he rejoined the Foreign Ministry and in 1899 received his first diplomatic posting, as consul in Melbourne.³

1 AVPRI: 159-464-2577, ff 19–20.

2 *The Advertiser*, 27 March 1900, p. 5.

3 AVPRI: 159-464-2577, ff 15–19.

Passek was married to Yelizaveta Petrovna Kuznetsova, the daughter of Petr Kuznetsov, a well-known Siberian gold-mine owner and patron of the arts, a merchant of the First Guild. Passek's father-in-law had paid for the artistic education of his fellow Siberian Vasily Surikov in the Academy of the Arts. The Passeks knew Surikov well and maintained friendly relations with him and his family. In 1887, they returned together from Krasnoyarsk to Moscow. After the journey, in a letter written on 28 October 1887, Surikov wrote, 'The journey went well. Passek and I parted in Nizhny Novgorod. He is a fine and very jolly fellow. On the journey (on the steamer) we would take tea together, provided in turn by him and his wife, then by my family and me.'⁴ On board the steamer, on the Volga, Surikov would paint a watercolour study showing a man sitting at a dining table waiting for his tea. The painting bears the title *In the Dining Room on a Volga Steamer*, and the seated man is Nikolai Passek. It is now held in a collection belonging to Surikov's great-grandsons, the film directors Nikita Mikhalkov and Andrei Mikhalkov-Konchalovsky.⁵

Passek proved a very energetic and enterprising diplomat. He attempted, for example, to urge Russian officials and entrepreneurs to take more interest in developing trade between Russia and Australia, by bombarding with letters not only the relevant government departments but his own relative, a petroleum engineer from Baku, encouraging him to participate in establishing a trade in petroleum products with Australia.⁶ During Passek's consulship, the Australian Commonwealth was proclaimed on 1 January 1901. Passek took part in Sydney as the representative of Russia. Noticing what he regarded as a disrespectful attitude to the consuls accredited in Melbourne, he speedily arranged for them to make a demonstrative departure from Sydney.⁷ In many ways such actions were due to his irrepressible nature. Later, Passek's colleague in Persia, where he was transferred after his service in Australia, would say of him: 'He knew no restraint and brooked no objections; he was hot-tempered and abrupt ... He would get carried away with work and often wrote from morning

4 Quoted in N. P. Konchalovskaia, *Dar bestsenyi*, Moscow, Detskaia literatura, 1964, p. 177.

5 Nikita Mikhalkov: actor, film director, head of the Russian Union of Cinematographers, best known for his films *Oblomov* (1980) and *Burnt by the Sun* (1994). Andrei Mikhalkov-Konchalovsky: brother of Nikita; film director, known for *A Nest of Gentlefolk* and *Uncle Vania*, among other films.

6 RGIA: 23-25-88, ff 1-2.

7 AVPRI: 184-520-1004, f. 50.

to night for weeks on end ... He was a splendid orator, quite at home at receptions and official dinners, when his duty gave him an opportunity to speak.⁸

In two years spent working in Australia, Passek wrote five long articles, which were published in the *Collected Consular Dispatches* in 1901 and 1902. Of these, the most interesting is 'A History of Australian Self-Rule'.⁹ In the view of Elena Govor, the specialist in Russian–Australian connections, that article 'may justly be called the first Russian study of the development of the political system of the Australian colonies and the establishment of federation'.¹⁰

Apparently Passek's family broke up in Australia; his wife Yelizaveta returned to Krasnoyarsk, and he set off for Persia, having been appointed consul general in Bushehr. There he worked until 1912, his principal task being to counter British efforts to neutralise Russian influence in southern Persia. He succeeded in effectively having a visit to Bushehr by Lord Curzon, the British Viceroy of India, called off. One of his important achievements in Persia was the map that he compiled, showing all the country's roads and railways, stations, post offices, telegraph and marine cables, and the population of its cities and towns. For that he was granted an award by the Shah and made a member of the Persian Academy. In 1912, he was sent to Montreal as consul general. In the summer of 1913, he was due to be transferred to Barcelona, but he was not to reach Spain. He died in Montreal on 20 February 1914.¹¹ In 2012, the Montreal journalist Eugene Sokoloff found his grave in Mount Royal cemetery.¹²

8 S. V. Chirkin, *Dvadsat' let sluzhby na Vostoke. Zapiski tsarskogo diplomata*, Moscow, Russkii put', 2006, p. 93.

9 N. P. Passek, 'Istoricheskii ocherk avstraliiskogo samoupravleniia', *Sbornik konsul'skikh donesenii*, 1901, 3.

10 E. V. Govor, 'Doneseniia russkikh konsulov v Avstralii kak istoricheskii istochnik', *Programma XVI nauchnoi konferentsii po izucheniiu Avstralii i Okeanii*, Moscow, IVAN, 1985, p. 24.

11 *Toronto World*, 23 February 1914, p. 2.

12 E. S. Sokolov, 'Obretennaia stranitsa russkoi istorii Monrealia', *Ostrov Monreal*, No. 15, 2012, pp. 6–8.

83. Passek to Imperial Russian Embassy, London

Melbourne,
13 April (31 March) 1900
No. 8

[...] I have the honour to attach herewith for the Imperial Embassy the draft of the federal constitution of the Australian Colonies in the form drafted by a meeting of premiers of the colonies and adopted by the federal Australian congress of representatives on 16 March 1898.

As the Imperial Embassy is aware, this draft is now under consideration by the British Parliament.¹³ [...]

AVPRI 184 (Embassy in London) -520-984, f. 120. In Russian.

13 In March 1898, the third session of the National Australasian Constitutional Convention, which Passek calls the 'federal Australian congress of representatives', completed its work in Melbourne. (See Document 78.) On 16 March 1898, the conference completed the drafting of the constitution of the future Commonwealth of Australia. From 29 January to 2 February 1899, a conference of premiers of the Australian Colonies was held in Melbourne, and final amendments were made to the draft. In 1899, supporters of federation won a majority in a referendum in Victoria, New South Wales, Tasmania and Queensland. At the end of December 1899, a delegation from the Australian Colonies set out for London to discuss the draft federal constitution in the British corridors of power (see Document 78). In July 1900, after talks with the British Government in London, the *Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act 1900* was passed in the British Parliament and was given royal assent by Queen Victoria. Western Australia agreed to join the Commonwealth on special conditions. The Commonwealth of Australia was officially proclaimed a dominion of the British Empire on 1 January 1901.

84. Passek to N. I. Bobrikov, Governor-General of the Grand Duchy of Finland¹⁴

Melbourne,
28 (15) September 1900
No. 75

[...] While travelling through the Australian Colonies which fall within my purview, I visited Sydney, where one Mr Paul, a British subject,¹⁵ acts as Imperial Russian Consul. Mr Paul passed to me a letter which he had received in April of this year, written in Finnish and sent to him by Finnish immigrants living in the Colony of Queensland.

Not knowing what he should do or how he might be of assistance to the petitioners, he decided to let the matter rest until my arrival.

On receiving the letter, I engaged a sworn translator and asked him to make a literal translation of it. I am forwarding the original to Your Excellency, and keeping a copy, the English translation, in the Consular files.¹⁶

As you will see from the letter, there are at present up to 125 Finnish settlers in Queensland, and all were apparently taken in by the promises of some quasi-governmental agents operating in Finland in the period 1897–1898. From the letter it is clear that these agents acted with great deliberation, inviting mostly working people with large families, thus ensuring that any return to their homeland would be more difficult, if not completely impossible.

Wishing to find out and clarify the facts of the case, I made semi-official enquiries to establish the names of the agents who had visited Finland and so successfully recruited over one hundred Russian subjects, but could find no information, as I was told that they were officially unknown.

14 Nikolai Ivanovich Bobrikov: a general of infantry, later statesman. In 1898–1904, Governor-General of the Grand Duchy of Finland, where he pursued a policy of coercive Russification. The translation is made from the author's copy of an official letter to the Governor-General of Finland. Passek sent his copy to the Imperial Russian Embassy in London.

15 Edmund Paul, honorary Russian consul in Sydney.

16 The letter is not reproduced here.

A few days ago, however, chance provided an opportunity to learn more – though not everything – about this case: a certain Finnish baron, Carl Ferdinand Alfthan,¹⁷ the holder of a Russian–Finnish passport issued in Helsingfors¹⁸ (and now expired), visited me and asked me to help him return home. In conversation it emerged that he was travelling as an inquisitive tourist but he had apparently chanced to visit Brisbane, where he had met some Finns and heard them complain of their hopeless situation. He also told me that he was without funds because he had had to take pity on two or three families and give them money for the fare home. He said that the emigrants complained to him of some Finnish anarchist (whose name he did not tell me) who had, it seems, enticed them into their situation, advising them insistently to avoid military service by settling in Australia, where he promised them mountains of gold. They later realised how they had been deceived and how their thoughtlessness and gullibility had brought them to this plight.

The Baron, a young man of educated appearance, thin, with a little moustache and auburn hair, made a favourable impression upon me. He speaks neither Russian nor French, so we conversed in English, which he knows well enough to make himself understood. Besides his passport he showed me a steamship ticket to the Cape of Good Hope, saying that he lacked the money for the fare to London, which he wishes to reach in order to take a Finnish steamer to Finland. I paid the balance of his fare to London and added some money for expenses en route, and at present he is on his way to England.

I am communicating this to Your Excellency as I assume that the information, meagre though it may be, will nonetheless provide a basis for the investigation of campaigns in Finland to canvas emigration, apparently conducted by agents with a political agenda.

If special funds could be found for the return of such settlers, in my view that would be the best outcome for dozens of families of Russian nationals, who would upon their return serve as valuable examples of the dangers of leaving one's homeland, the groundlessness of the propaganda and its false promises. [...]

AVPRI 184 (Embassy in London) -520-1004, ff 8–9. Author's copy. In Russian.

17 Alfthan: Baron Carl Ferdinand Alfthan, a Finnish nobleman, the son of the former Russian governor of the provinces of Uleaborgs and Nylands, Lieutenant-General Georg von Alfthan.

18 Helsingfors: renamed Helsinki when Finland gained independence in 1917.

85. Passek to Imperial Russian Embassy, London

Melbourne,
11 January 1901 (29 December 1900)
No. 138

[...] I have the honour to forward with this a copy of my correspondence with St Petersburg concerning the Orthodox Church in Melbourne, with other various attachments related to the ceremonial founding of the first Orthodox Church in Melbourne. [...]

Letter to V. K. Sabler,¹⁹ 6 June 1900 [OS]

Dear Mr Sabler,

Before departing for Australia I requested that Your Excellency assist the Orthodox Christian community in Melbourne in the colony of Victoria, both in the matter of appointing an Orthodox priest, and in that of funds for his maintenance, as well as, if possible, establishing at least a small chapel in which the faithful could meet and worship. At that time I had no precise information on the then state of these matters; I knew only that (1) in Melbourne there was a certain Father Dorotheios, who was held in little esteem by the local Orthodox community, (2) that the local Orthodox community had applied to the Patriarch of Jerusalem to have another priest sent, and (3) that the Patriarch's requirement of a guarantee of maintenance for the priest could not be met.²⁰ The ministry did not know how matters really stood, because for the past two years when there were no Russian imperial consuls in Melbourne the duties of consul were discharged by the French Consul General in Melbourne, who did not feel himself entitled to deal with such matters.²¹

In view of this uncertainty, Your Excellency decided to leave the question unresolved, while at the same time instructing me to collect all the information in order to clarify the real situation.

¹⁹ Vladimir Karlovich Sabler: Russian statesman, in 1900 deputy to the Supreme Procurator of the Holy Synod. Supreme Procurator in 1911–1915.

²⁰ See Documents 69 and 70.

²¹ From 1898 to 1900 (from Ungern-Sternberg's departure until Passek's arrival), L. A. Dejardin, the French consul general, acted as Russian consul in Melbourne.

Now that I am in possession of all the facts, I have the honour to bring them to Your Excellency's attention.

In the colony of Victoria the Orthodox number over 1,000, but they are mostly scattered over the broad area of the colony; in Melbourne itself, the capital of the colony, there are 140 families of Orthodox Greeks, 67 of Orthodox Syrians, and two Russian Orthodox families. All these people have been here for many years, and until 1894, that is, before the appointment of the first consul in Melbourne, A. D. Poutiata, they felt powerless, lamented the absence of Orthodox services, and felt much moral regret for their children, whom they could neither baptise nor bury according to the Orthodox rite.

Seeing their sorry situation, Sister Esther, the head of the Diocesan Deaconess's Home,²² took pity on them and, as they had learned to speak English, translated the Orthodox services and prayers into English, gathered them in the premises of that society, read them the gospels, psalms and prayers, and with the help of an Anglican High Church pastor, baptised their children according to the Orthodox rite. (See the attachment for details.)²³

In 1894, when our first consul, A. D. Poutiata, arrived, their situation changed. He eagerly set about establishing an Orthodox church in Melbourne, applied to have a priest sent, saw to the raising of capital to provide for the priest and establish the church, drafted the statutes for an Orthodox parish of Russian, Greek and Serbian faithful, corresponded with his relatives about orders for an iconostasis and having church utensils etc. sent out, but his strength failed. The consumption from which he had long suffered progressed rapidly,²⁴ and after only nine months here he died, and the burial service for the first Russian consul in Australia was conducted by a pastor of the Anglican High Church, according to the Orthodox rite, in the hall of the Deaconess's Home.

In 1895 a certain Father Dorotheios, of Greek extraction, arrived in Melbourne. How he came to be here, the consular files contain no information. However, the local Orthodox welcomed him with open

22 In full: the Diocesan Deaconess's Home and Mission to the Streets and Lanes, opened by the Anglican Church in 1885 as a charitable mission to aid Melbourne's slum-dwellers. It was headed by Sister Esther (Emma Caroline Silcock).

23 The attachment has not been traced.

24 This is incorrect. Poutiata died of kidney disease.

arms and furnished him with all that their resources would permit. But it soon emerged that, as he was only a deacon, he could not conduct mass. Moreover, he was by nature exceedingly arrogant and imperious and often surrendered to a liking for drink. All this meant that the local Orthodox began to cool towards him, then to avoid him, and finally collected funds and sent him to Sydney. There he stayed for a few months, then, according to some information I managed to obtain, he had to decamp for San Francisco. There all trace of him was lost.²⁵

All this took place in the years 1895–1898, when the post of consul here was held by Baron R. Ungern-Sternberg, a Lutheran, and as the question concerned primarily Orthodox Greeks, Serbs and Syrians, he did not feel he had to intervene at all.

From 1897 to March of this year, after the departure of Baron Ungern-Sternberg, our consular affairs were handled by the French Consul General, a Catholic, who had even less reason to deal with the matter. Owing to this combination of circumstances, the Foreign Ministry was left completely uninformed as to its progress throughout this period. In the meantime the local Orthodox, driven to the limit, have done all they could over the past two years to achieve the appointment of an Orthodox priest, to provide for him, establish a temporary church and acquire land for the construction of an Orthodox church in Melbourne. And I am happy to be able to report to Your Excellency that they have achieved much: the Patriarch of Jerusalem has heeded their pleas and sent them a priest,²⁶ the church utensils they need, books for their services and vestments for the clergy. Upon my arrival I met the priest, who had already been serving the needs of the local congregation for about two years, and for almost two years he has been holding services in a temporary Orthodox church, an abandoned church which belonged to the Church of Scotland. Such an agreeable surprise made up for my being far from my homeland and dispelled the fear that I would be deprived for many years of the solace and communion of Orthodoxy. At the same time it has made me so bold as to appeal to Your Excellency to seek the assistance of the Holy Synod in bringing the worthy endeavours of the local Orthodox Christians to a successful conclusion, so that that handful of Orthodox Christians

25 On the role of the Russian consulate in Melbourne in the departure of Father Dorotheios, see Document 70.

26 In 1899, Patriarch Damian of Jerusalem sent Father Athanasios Kandopoulos to Melbourne.

should be able to establish firmly and elevate Orthodoxy here, and make possible the raising of the Holy Orthodox Cross in this part of the world, so that it might shine as brightly and proudly as at home in Holy Russia.

I do not presume to indicate the extent or nature of the assistance of the Holy Synod, but at the same time, in order that the Synod should understand the needs, I have the honour to include herewith for Your Excellency some additional information.

I dare to hope that Your Excellency will not deny me, as the sole representative here of an Orthodox state, your kind assistance and good will, in which, as I recall the generous welcome and sincere readiness you extended when we met in person, I place my hopes, for it is my wish to instil in the hearts not only of the local Orthodox, but of all members of the British colony here, the awareness that Great Orthodox Russia, often called Holy, is the protector of Orthodoxy everywhere and always, irrespective of race and citizenship.

This letter was accompanied by the curriculum vitae and all information about the Melbourne Orthodox priest; the financial position of the church community, and an inventory of all its property, books and utensils; a photograph of the interior of the church and a plan of the future church which we propose to construct when land has been purchased for it.

N.B. I received no answer to my letter! Not having received the assistance we sought, we have had to rely on our own resources.

The lease of the premises has no fixed term and the rent is paid by the month, so the Committee (which I chair)²⁷ has reason to expect a refusal at any moment, because it is rumoured that the site, along with old churches and some other buildings, is being purchased by the Melbourne city council in order to build a college. This means that, in spite of all our endeavours, our work and our good will, we Orthodox may again one fine day find ourselves without a church.

In view of this, the Committee has opened a subscription fund among the local Orthodox believers in order specially to raise the capital to acquire a site for a future church and to build it. Plans (attached) have been drawn

27 The Committee of the Orthodox Community in Melbourne, chaired by Passek.

up by a local architect.²⁸ A little over £600 has been raised, and we now have a vacant lot at the corner of two fine streets in the centre of the city. The price, with sundry purchase fees, came to £607.7.8d. The work of construction according to the attached plan remains to be done. The architects estimate that in its present form it will cost £3,500, which is of concern to the Committee. This is why it has appealed for support.

The rumours concerning the purchase by the city of the site of our temporary church, and the structures, proved correct. On 1 November last year the council demanded that we vacate the premises. Thanks to my intervention, we were granted a reprieve of two months. Given our hopeless situation, we were obliged to seek premises for another temporary church. Fortunately we came to an agreement with the city and obtained a large government-school hall for temporary use, on Sundays only. For this we pay £2 a month. However, this has spurred us to proceed speedily to the building of a permanent church; another subscription fund was set up and about £600 collected, and we have decided to lay the foundations and make a start on its gradual construction. We chose our Emperor's name-day as Foundation Day, and that occurred on 6th/19th December at one o'clock.²⁹ The laying of the foundation stone was conducted with all possible ceremony, and all the local authorities were also invited.

I also attach a description of the ceremony.³⁰

On Foundation Day I sent two telegrams: one to Count Lamsdorff in Livadia;³¹ the other to our envoy in Athens. (See over.)

To Count Lamsdorff,
Livadia

‘Today the foundation stone of the first Orthodox church in Australia was laid. I beg your Excellency to convey to His Majesty the absolute loyalty of the Russian subjects and the endless devotion of the Syrians and Greeks, and the warmest wishes of health to the Emperor. Recognition from the Supreme Head of the Church will succour the faithful.’³²

28 The plans, a whimsical mixture of Byzantine tradition and typical Anglican church architecture, are not reproduced here. They were drafted by the local architects George Charles Inskip and Walter Richmond Butler.

29 19 December. The Emperor from 1894 to 1917 was Nicholas II, whose name-day was marked on that date.

30 The description, from press material, is not reproduced here.

31 Vladimir Nikolayevich Lamsdorff was imperial Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1900 to 1906. The Russian Envoy in Greece in 1889–1901 was Mikhail Konstantinovich Onu.

32 The Emperor Nicholas II was considered secular head of the Russian Orthodox Church.

To the Russian Envoy,
Athens

‘Today the foundation stone of the first Orthodox church in Australia was laid. I beg Your Excellency to convey to Her Majesty Queen Olga the loyalty of her subjects and the deepest respect of the Russians and Syrians. The gracious attention of Her Orthodox Majesty will succour the faithful.’³³

To the first telegram I have had the pleasure of receiving the following reply: ‘On your telegram the Emperor has been so kind as to write, “I am glad to learn of this event. I thank you. Please convey this to all who took part in the ceremony.” Count Lamsdorff.’ [...]

AVPRI 184 (Embassy in London) -520-1004, ff 10, 14–17. Original and author’s copies. In Russian, with text of cables in French.

86. Passek to Imperial Russian Embassy, London

Melbourne,
11 January 1901 (29 December 1900)
No. 140

[...] During the month of July the local newspapers published several reports and even, apparently, telegrams to the effect that the Russian Government has not only enquired of local trading companies the prices of various items of provisions needed to supply our forces now engaged in China,³⁴ but also gone so far as to place orders.

33 Queen Olga: consort of King George I of Greece, who reigned from 1863 to 1913. Olga Konstantinovna Romanova was the daughter of Grand Duke Konstantin Nikolayevich, a niece of Tsar Alexander II.

34 This refers to the participation of Russian troops in the suppression of the Boxer Rebellion in China in 1898–1901. The Boxer Rebellion was a popular anti-colonial uprising against the penetration and growing influence of the European great powers, the US and Japan. To crush it, joint intervention was organised by the armies and navies of Russia, Britain, Germany, Austria-Hungary, the US, Japan and Italy.

Being interested in the reports and telegrams, and knowing that the British Government is continuing to place large orders for pressed and salted meat, hard tack, rusks and even pressed fodder for horses (oats in green form), and that the German Government has procured up to 4,000 horses for its cavalry in China, I approached representatives of local specialised firms with the aim of discovering the source of these announcements. From talking to them I learned that the Russian Government has not directly approached anybody in Australia, but that agents of Australian companies in Vladivostok, Port Arthur and Weihaiwei have been making enquiries about prices on the pretext that representatives of our defence ministry have asked them.³⁵

Since I am very familiar with conditions in Siberia, which I have visited four times, and the absence in those parts of many essential goods, and appreciate all the difficulty of transport and supply of provisions in those parts, having in mind the scale of an order to provision our forces in China and wishing to reduce as far as possible the costs which our Government would incur should it place an order, I judged it my moral obligation to render all possible assistance. To this end I made the rounds of all the trading companies in Melbourne which make special deliveries, and visited Sydney for the same purpose. From Brisbane I obtained written communications from the companies there – all in order to gather and establish the current prices at first hand for various commodities. I spoke to a Japanese shipping company about freight charges and delivery times to Vladivostok or Port Arthur, and having gathered all this information sent a telegram (copy attached)³⁶ to the Second Department of our Ministry.³⁷ [...]

AVPRI 184 (Embassy in London) -520-1004, ff 22–23. In Russian.

35 Weihaiwei: a port city on the north coast of the Shandong Peninsula. In 1898, it was leased to Britain for the establishment of a naval base.

36 The attachment is not reproduced here.

37 Passek's efforts to arrange supplies from Australia for the Russian army in China came to nothing.

87. Passek to Imperial Russian Embassy, London

Melbourne,
25 (12) January 1901
No. 157

I have the honour to report to the Embassy that on 23rd January, the day on which news came of the death of Her Majesty Queen Victoria,³⁸ I thought it my immediate duty to send two official telegrams.

Telegram to Lord Hopetoun, Governor-General:

‘The death of Her most gracious Majesty Queen Victoria calls upon me to express to Your Excellency, on behalf of the subjects of Russia resident in the Commonwealth of Australia and myself, the profound grief we feel at the great loss the British nation has sustained. I have further to offer our condolences for the personal loss of a Royal Friend whom Your Excellency has to mourn.’³⁹

Telegram to Sir John Madden, Lieutenant Governor for Victoria:

‘On behalf of the Russian residents in the State of Victoria and myself, I would beg leave to inform Your Excellency of the infinite distress we felt at the demise of Her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria, which has plunged the British nation into such grief at so grave a loss.’

The same day I received a reply from Sydney:

‘I beg to acknowledge with grateful thanks receipt of your sympathetic telegram which I shall not fail to transmit to the members of the Royal family at the earliest opportunity. Hopetoun, Governor-General.’

In addition, I made arrangements for a solemn requiem mass to be held on the premises of the Orthodox Church on 24th January and placed an announcement in the local press. An account of the service is attached.⁴⁰
[...]

AVPRI 184 (Embassy in London) -520-1004, f. 29. In Russian, with text of cables in English.

38 Queen Victoria died on 22 January 1901.

39 During his career, Lord Hopetown had been lord-in-waiting to the Queen and lord chamberlain.

40 The account is not reproduced here.

88. Passek to Imperial Russian Embassy, London

Melbourne,
3 April (21 March) 1901
No. 242

[...] I have the honour to inform the Embassy hereby that, during the celebrations associated with the Proclamation of the Commonwealth of Australia, which took place on 1st January this year, I was present at two of the official ceremonies together with our consul in New South Wales.⁴¹

Incidentally, I consider it necessary to state that the external décor for all these celebrations was splendid and cost a great deal of money, whereas the internal organisation left much to be desired: we consuls had to fight to obtain invitations. Owing to the confusion, five Consuls General and I, having arrived from Melbourne, attended only two of the ceremonies: the proclamation of Federation and the banquet, and only as private individuals at that. After that, finding such lack of attention by the local authorities towards foreign representatives unacceptable, we all returned to Melbourne together, where, a week later, we received up to twenty different official invitations, with the explanation that the unfortunate incident had occurred due to the inexperience of the Organising Committee's office staff in dealing with a new task.

An eloquent example of the absence of any kind of organisation in the issuing of invitations was the official invitation sent to the President of the Legislative Assembly in the Colony of Victoria,⁴² who was allocated a seat on the back bench at the ceremony for the Proclamation of the Commonwealth of Australia, and at the banquet (for 1,200 persons) was placed next to the exit doors. Finding these places inappropriate to his post, he declined to attend.

41 Consul in New South Wales: i.e. Edmund Paul, honorary Russian consul in New South Wales.

42 It is difficult to be sure who Passek is referring to. In the Victorian political system, the President was the head of the Legislative Council, the upper chamber of Parliament. The lower chamber, the Legislative Assembly, was headed by the Speaker. The President of the Legislative Council of Victoria was Sir William Austin Zeal. The Speaker of the Legislative Assembly in 1897–1902 was Francis Conway Mason.

The opening of the first Federal Parliament by His Highness the Duke of Cornwall,⁴³ as well as all the celebrations associated with this event, will take place in Melbourne and not in Sydney. [...]

AVPRI 184 (Embassy in London) -520-1004, f. 50. In Russian. Translated by Maria Kravchenko.

89. Passek to Imperial Russian Embassy, London

Melbourne,
16 (3) April 1901
No. 252

[...] A few days ago the principal permanent Agent of the state of New South Wales in London wrote to the Prime Minister of the Australian Commonwealth Mr Barton,⁴⁴ to draw his attention to the island of Kerguelen (50° S., 68° E.) in the south of the Indian Ocean,⁴⁵ pointing out that it is an extremely important strategic point for the Commonwealth.

This island, he wrote, being half-way between Britain's African and Australian possessions, is a splendid observation point, not only for the trade routes which pass to its north, between it and St Paul,⁴⁶ but also in the event of naval operations.

The island of Kerguelen is 100 English miles long and 58 miles wide. It has several fine bays, convenient for anchorage, including the famous Christmas Harbour.⁴⁷ The climatic conditions are very severe and it is considered to be completely barren of vegetation, for which reason it was long called Desolation Island.

In 1893 it was claimed by France.

43 Duke of Cornwall: one of the titles of the eldest son of the British monarch and heir to the throne. After the death of Queen Victoria and the accession of her son Edward VII, the title passed to the new heir to the throne, the future George V. George and his consort Mary also held the titles Duke and Duchess of York.

44 The Agent General for New South Wales in London in 1900–1903 was Henry Copeland.

45 Kerguelen is 2,000 km north of Antarctica and approximately 4,800 km southwest of Australia. In area it is 6,675 sq. km.

46 St Paul is a volcanic outcrop of some 6 sq. km, situated in the Indian Ocean about 1,200 km north-northeast of Kerguelen. From 1892, it belonged to France.

47 Christmas Harbour: a bay on the northwest side of Kerguelen.

At present Mr Copeland (the New South Wales Agent in London) believes that the time is right for the Federal Government to pay due attention to this island, and advises it to take all steps to annex it to the Commonwealth.

The question was considered yesterday by the Cabinet, which fully shared Mr Copeland's view and instructed the Prime Minister to approach Mr Chamberlain about it.⁴⁸ [...]

AVPRI 184 (Embassy in London) -520-988, f. 72. In Russian.

90. Passek to Imperial Russian Embassy, London

Melbourne,
17 (4) June 1901
No. 282

[...] Owing to the pneumonia which I have just suffered, my dispatch about the Melbourne celebrations on the occasion of the opening of the first Federal Parliament has been very much delayed.⁴⁹

On 6th May, at 1.30 p.m. the steamer *Ophir*, with the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall on board,⁵⁰ approached a line of warships stationed at a set distance one from another on her route to her designated position. The ships were ordered according to their draught; first in line stood the *Gromoboi*, which was also the first to greet their Royal Highnesses with a salute.⁵¹ I was on board that ship.

48 Joseph Chamberlain: British Colonial Secretary at the time.

49 The first session of the Federal Parliament opened on 9 May 1901. The dates given by Passek are in New Style.

50 The Duke of Cornwall and York, the son of King Edward VII, and the Duchess arrived in Melbourne on the royal yacht *Ophir* as representatives of the British royal house for the opening of Federal Parliament.

51 The *Gromoboi*, a first-class cruiser of the Russian Navy, was specially ordered to Melbourne by Nicholas II. In its way, the visit was an act of international courtesy: this powerful vessel of the latest design, with German, US and Dutch warships, performed honorary escort duties for the Duke and Duchess in Australian waters. The *Gromoboi* reached Melbourne on 30 April 1901, under the command of Captain First Class Karl Petrovich Jessen.

When the *Ophir* dropped anchor, all admirals and captains of the foreign warships moored close to it and presented themselves to their Highnesses.

A ceremonial entry into Melbourne then took place, in which, at the request of the Duke, no one participated except for their Highnesses and their retinues.

Of the eleven-day celebrations, only three ceremonial events were of an official nature. The first was the official presentation to His Highness at the Governor-General's residence; 4,000 people were introduced to him as they arrived; no exceptions were made, nor was any order of rank observed. His Highness silently shook the hand of everyone presented to him.

The second was the ceremonial opening of Parliament, which took place in the building of the former Melbourne exhibition; 8,000 people were invited to the ceremony, and seating was allocated according to status. I cannot say that the consular corps were particularly honoured, but since I arrived with the captain of the cruiser, who possessed an invitation ticket in the section assigned for consuls, I requested better seats and we were immediately given armchairs in the front row. The United States admiral and his adjutant were sought out during the ceremony and given seats next to us. The German admiral and his adjutants, however, had to stand throughout the whole ceremony, while all the British naval officers occupied a separate section and were seated in the front rows, and the British admiral sat in His Highness's box. Who was to blame I do not know, but I do know that all the foreign naval representatives, including the commander of the cruiser *Gromoboi*, were indignant at such treatment of their comrade in arms.

The third occasion was the review of the local troops, which took place at the racecourse; 15,000 people were invited. There was no order whatsoever, and an unimaginable crush. The naval representatives were personally invited by the Duke to join him in his marquee.

The rest of the celebrations were of a partly semi-official, partly private nature, and the Duke and Duchess attended them only as guests of honour.

I did not raise the matter of rank or any agreement concerning our relative positions with the Captain,⁵² as I endeavoured to ensure a suitable place for him at all times, so that no misunderstandings could arise in this area, nor did they.

The one thing that I do regret is that the Imperial Embassy, when notifying me about the cruiser's arrival, did not inform me as to the particulars of the Captain's authorisation, or the nature and extent of his representative powers, for in his speeches at several of the semi-official luncheons the Captain spoke of himself – in very poor and incorrect English, incidentally – not as a representative of the State, but as a representative of the Sovereign Emperor, and I was not forewarned of this.

Furthermore, it was not entirely clear to me whether the ship was sent to attend the country's political celebrations, or if it was sent solely to greet the Duke. To the best of my knowledge, Australia petitioned all countries through the British Government to send naval vessels for the proclamation day of Australia's Federation or for the opening day of the first Federal Parliament. Moreover, as the Embassy is aware, by virtue of the political and administrative organisation of the country, the host of the festivities and the focus of the celebrations was the local government and not its guest of honour the Duke, which is why it seemed difficult for me to identify the purpose of the warships' arrival. Nonetheless, the Captain of the cruiser made it known at every opportunity that he was sent solely and exclusively to greet the Duke.

Our first visit to the Parliament, initiated by me, was accompanied by much unexpected ceremony. All the ministers of the Federation and the state, and the speakers of both Houses, assembled to meet us on the front steps of the Parliament building, clad in their quaint full-dress uniforms, and invited us to luncheon there, and the Prime Minister of Australia, Mr Barton,⁵³ in his speech expressed Australia's deepest gratitude to our Sovereign Emperor for His gracious attention towards a young country. 'We all take pride,' he said, 'in this high honour bestowed upon us by

52 As Passek and Jessen were effectively appearing as representatives of Russia at the ceremonial opening of parliament, particular importance was attached to the question of precedence – that is, of who officially headed the small Russian delegation. Passek's instructions from the Foreign Ministry said nothing about it. The official purpose of the *Gromoboi's* visit was also unclear to him. Was it solely as an escort for the Duke and Duchess, in accordance with the Emperor's orders? Or were the vessel and its crew also to participate in the ceremonies as representatives of Russia? Passek provides more detail on the resulting misunderstandings in his dispatch.

53 The luncheon at which Edmund Barton spoke was on 1 May 1901.

mighty Russia, and will endeavour to hand down to our descendants our feelings of gratitude ...’ On the following day all the Ministers, together with the Governor-General’s adjutants and the Governors, paid a visit to the Captain of the cruiser and presented the wardroom with a huge photograph of Parliament House ... Endless official and semi-official invitations to luncheons and dinners followed, all accompanied by words of gratitude for the honour, but in reply the Captain found it necessary to announce every time that he had been sent to greet the Duke.

Frankly speaking, this frequent repetition of the purpose of his visit markedly cooled the enthusiasm of local representatives and they began to treat us Russian representatives with noticeably increased reserve and coolness. I, however, wanted to restore the former spirit, the former tone, and maintain it until the end of the *Gromoboi’s* visit. For this reason, in my capacity of Imperial Russian Consul, I sent printed invitations to a luncheon to all the Australian and Victorian Ministers, all the representatives of the administration and foreign navies, and of course to the whole crew of the cruiser and the Captain. Luncheon was fixed for 1.30 p.m.;⁵⁴ everyone arrived at the appointed time, with the exception of the Russian Captain and his officers. Apologising to the guests, I telephoned the ship in order to ascertain the reason for their absence, and received the reply that for some reason, at that precise time, the cruiser had to be towed from one mooring to another. Having receiving this reply, we were obliged to sit down to luncheon without the representatives of Russia! At 2.30 p.m. several of the officers appeared and at 3 o’clock the Captain arrived in civilian clothes, whereas all the other representatives were in full-dress uniforms. Since luncheon was coming to an end, I immediately arose when the Captain arrived and delivered a speech, in which I thanked all the local authorities for their unflinching readiness to accommodate my requests, for their generous and cordial reception, for the kindness and warmth with which they welcomed their Russian guests, and concluded by saying that I was deeply touched by the fact that they fully appreciated Our Sovereign Emperor’s gracious attitude towards their newborn nation and their young country. Immediately after me, the Captain rose and announced that, although he was very grateful for the welcome afforded him by the local government, he must, however, again declare that had the Duke and Duchess not been here, the *Gromoboi*

54 This luncheon was held on 18 May 1901.

would not have been in Australian waters, so he proposed a toast to the health of the Duke and Duchess ... There was an awkward silence and some slight, dismissive shrugs.

I, of course, have the honour of occupying a consular position for the first time, but I hope I may be permitted to state that I had assumed that the orders issued to the captain of a warship sent as a representative, whatever the reason, to a country where the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has a representative, should include both the objective of the mission and the programme of obligatory speeches, with which he should comply in full, in order to avoid lamentable incidents (!) and to be at one with the local representative.⁵⁵ [...]

Of course, none of the above led to either difficulties or misunderstandings between the Captain and me, but all our relations remained on a strictly official footing, which is less than desirable when in a foreign land!

The *Gromoboi* was due to sail from Sydney on 3rd/16th June.⁵⁶ [...]

AVPRI 184 (Embassy in London) -520-1004, ff 134–136. In Russian.

55 This incident, which arose because the Foreign Ministry's instructions to Passek were inaccurate and incomplete, later became the subject of an official investigation in the Ministry.

56 The *Gromoboi* left Melbourne for Sydney on 23 May and stayed in Sydney from 25 May to 20 June 1901.

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