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The "Memoirs" of Count Münnich

Since the first Russian publication of Count B. C. Münnich's "Memoirs" in 1842 historians have employed them as a useful primary source on eighteenth-century history.¹ However, the Russian title, *Zapiski*, is misleading. Münnich was not writing his personal memoirs or even a state memorandum: instead he was offering a proposal for central government reform with an accompanying historical justification. Scholars have occasionally remarked on this aspect of the document.² But it has gone unrecognized that Münnich's writing also bore a strongly partisan political imprint. The political design only becomes clear in the context of the prolonged battle for position and influence waged between two powerful court parties in the first years of Catherine II's reign. At a crucial stage in this struggle Münnich used his proposal in an apparent attempt to break the deadlock and facilitate Nikita Panin's rise to power in late 1763. Panin's victory, in turn, determined the direction of Russian foreign policy during the next two decades. When seen in this light, the aging statesman's "Memoirs" take on a new and interesting dimension.

The respect and esteem enjoyed by Burchard Christoph von Münnich was a result of his long and faithful service in Russian government. Born in Oldenburg in 1683 the son of an ennobled military engineer, he received an excellent education, following his father's specialty of military and hydraulic engineering. After serving with several European armies, he accepted an offer from Peter the Great to come to Russia in 1721. Peter put Münnich in charge of one of his favorite projects, the Ladoga Canal, and richly rewarded the

1. The first two translations from the French original (*Russkii vestnik*, St. Petersburg, 1842, no. 1, pp. 77–134, and *Russkaia starina*, 1874, no. 1, pp. 73–105) contained many errors. Further references in this paper will be to the original publication, *Ebauche pour donner une idée de la forme du Gouvernement de l'empire de Russie* (Copenhagen, 1774), or to the improved Russian translation, *Zapiski fel'dmarshala grafa Minikha*, ed. S. N. Shubinsky (St. Petersburg, 1874) (hereafter *Zapiski grafa Minikha*).

2. See, for example, K. N. Bestuzhev-Riumin's preface to *Zapiski grafa Minikha*, pp. xvi–xvii; N. D. Chechulin, "Proekt Imperatorskogo Soveta," *Zhurnal Ministerstva narodnogo prosveshcheniia*, 1894, no. 3, p. 80; Francis Ley, *Le Maréchal de Münnich et la Russie au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris, 1959), pp. 231–70, which has a synopsis and analysis of the *Ebauche*; and the most recent reference, V. A. Petrova, "Politicheskaia bor'ba vokrug senatskoi reformy 1763 goda," *Vestnik Leningradskogo universiteta*, vypusk 2 (April 1967), no. 8, p. 61, where, however, Petrova mistakenly attributes the work to Ernst Münnich, the field marshal's son.

energetic foreigner's success with this and other construction efforts.³ After Peter's death Münnich's fortunes continued to rise. In 1728 he became governor-general of Inghria, Karelia, and Finland. Two years later Empress Anne appointed him president of the War College. During her reign he commanded the Russian army at the siege of Danzig and in the Turkish War (1735–39). After the death of Empress Anne, Münnich fought his way to the pinnacle of power by pushing aside the Regent Biron and making himself prime minister under Anna Leopoldovna's regency.⁴ Glory during that turbulent interregnum was, however, shortlived. Within a few months Münnich was removed by Andrei Ostermann, who himself fell soon thereafter to Elizabeth's coup d'état. Münnich suffered the indignity of spending the next twenty years in the house he had prepared for Biron's exile in Pelym, a small town in Western Siberia. In 1762 Peter III recalled him to St. Petersburg. He served Peter well, but shifted his support to Catherine after her takeover was an accomplished fact. It was at this point he became involved in the court struggle between the two factions that helped the new empress to power.

Catherine II came to the throne in June 1762 with the active support of young officers of the guards regiments and the tacit approval or at least neutrality of many established dignitaries in the Senate and other high administrative bodies.⁵ But as soon as Peter III was out of the way and the immediate danger of a counter coup averted, a split developed among Catherine's supporters. They divided generally between the newcomers, such as the Orlov brothers and their friends in the guards, and the ranking officials of the time, who hoped to gain a measure of control over the new government and protect their positions against the challenge posed by the young upstarts.

3. Ernst Minikh, "Zapiski grafa Ernsta Minikha, syna fel'dmarshala pisannye im dlia detei svoikh," in *Rossii i russkii dvor v pervoi polovine XVIII veka* (St. Petersburg, 1891), p. 13; additional sources on Münnich's biography include Ley's work, cited in note 2, and M. Vischer, *Münnich* (Frankfurt, 1938), as well as older studies: Anton Friedrich Büsching, "Lebensgeschichte Burchard Christophs von Münnich," *Magazin für die Neue Historie und Geographie*, vol. 3 (Hamburg, 1769), pp. 387–536; G. A. Halem, *Lebensbeschreibung des russisch-kaiserlichen General-Feldmarschalls B. C. Grafen f. Münnich* (Oldenburg, 1803); M. D. Khmyrov, "Fel'dtseikhmeisterstvo grafa Minikha," in *Zapiski grafa Minikha*, pp. 217–387; Christophe Hermann Manstein, *Mémoires historiques, politiques et militaires sur la Russie*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1860).

4. Manstein, *Mémoires*, vol. 2. For a critical view of some points in Manstein see "Zamechaniia na Zapiski Manshteina o Rossii, 1724–1744," in *Rossii i russkii dvor*, pp. 123–222; Arved Jürgensohn's detailed investigation of the "Zamechaniia" (pp. 225–83) established Ernst Minikh as the author, a fact evidently not noticed by a recent scholar of this period, who continues erroneously to attribute the work to Peter Panin: S. M. Troitsky, "Istoriografia 'dvortsovykh perevorotov' v Rossii XVIII v.," *Voprosy istorii*, 1966, no. 2, p. 39.

5. The reasons for the Senate's acquiescence in Catherine's coup d'état are illuminated in a recent article by Marc Raeff, "The Domestic Policies of Peter III and His Overthrow," *American Historical Review*, 75, no. 5 (June 1970): 1289–1310.

The leader of the first group was former chancellor A. P. Bestuzhev-Riumin. Bestuzhev was certainly no newcomer. He had served in the Russian government since Peter I's time. But he had recently returned from a four-year exile, and could not count on support from the officials then serving. Most of them had, in fact, contributed in one way or another to his disgrace in 1758. He therefore gravitated to the new men, who were eager to employ the services of a skilled and experienced court politician.⁶

The party of dignitaries was led by Nikita Panin, Oberhofmeister and tutor of the Grand Duke Paul. Panin's party included Imperial Secretaries Grigorii Teplov and Adam Olsufiev, General Peter Panin, Senators Ivan Nepliev and Iakov Shakhovskoi, and others of the same caliber. These men planned to secure the authority of central government institutions from autocratic caprice and the arbitrary interference of court favorites—problems which had plagued previous eighteenth-century regimes in Russia.⁷ Nikita Panin outlined the means to this end in his project to establish an imperial council and to divide the Senate into departments. He intended to define the authority of the various branches of administration and prescribe procedures that would delimit the channels through which the new empress could exercise her power.⁸ Another aspect of the Panin program was a foreign policy orientation based on alliance with Prussia.⁹ Both these measures were aimed against the Bestuzhev-Orlov group. The first would close out the influence of newcomers and favorites. The second would frustrate Bestuzhev's desire to re-establish the former alliance system based on friendship with Austria.

6. On Bestuzhev's policies in Elizabeth's reign and his disgrace see Herbert Kaplan, *Russia and the Outbreak of the Seven Years' War* (Berkeley, 1968); V. A. Bil'basov, "Pervye politicheskie pis'ma Ekateriny II," *Istoricheskie monografii*, vol. 3 (St. Petersburg, 1901), pp. 3–125; for the Orlovs see A. P. Barsukov, "Kniaz' Grigorii Grigor'evich Orlov," *Rasskazy iz russkoi istorii XVIII veka po arkhivnym dokumentam* (St. Petersburg, 1885), pp. 59–190.

7. Nikita Panin and Grigorii Teplov had outlined this program in the decree announcing Catherine's accession to the throne: *Osmnadtsatyi Vek*, vol. 4 (Moscow, 1869), pp. 216–23. The authorship is confirmed by Danish Ambassador Haxthausen's dispatch from St. Petersburg, July 19/30, 1762, *Danske Rigsarkivet*, TKUA, Russland A III, vol. 80, no. 127 (hereafter *DRA* with volume and number), which may be taken as reliable, since the Danish representatives enjoyed Panin's particular confidence at this time. An especially revealing example—where Panin hinted that a coup d'état was about to take place—is contained in Haxthausen to Bernstorff, St. Petersburg, June 10/21, 1762, *DRA*, vol. 80 (no number). Further evidence of the Danish secretary Schumacher's well-informed position is in V. A. Bil'basov, *Istoriia Ekateriny II*, vol. 1 (Berlin, 1900), pp. 119–20n.

8. The final draft of the decree announcing the reform and Panin's memorandum motivating the proposal are published in *Sbornik Imperatorskogo russkogo istoricheskogo obshchestva* (St. Petersburg, 1867–1916), 7:202–17 (hereafter *SIRIO*).

9. Studies of Panin's foreign policy system, known as the "Northern Accord," include N. D. Chechulin, *Vneshniaia politika Rossii v nachale tsarstvovaniia Ekateriny*

In the early months of Catherine's reign (July to December 1762) it appeared that the Panin party was winning. There was no return to the Austrian alliance, and the government maintained correct, if not friendly, relations with Prussia. Panin was able to submit his proposal for political reform.¹⁰ It called for the establishment of an imperial council composed of a select group of state dignitaries with the authority to scrutinize and make recommendations on all business passing between the sovereign and the Senate. Further, the council was to be responsible for coordinating the general direction of government policy. On December 28 Catherine signed the *ukaz* to put the reform into effect.

But then events took an unexpected turn. For reasons too detailed to mention here,¹¹ the empress refused to promulgate the *ukaz* of December 28, and by early February no more was heard about the council. At the same time, Bestuzhev and the Orlovs began to play a prominent role at court, and Bestuzhev became the principal adviser on foreign affairs.¹² In contrast, Panin's influence declined sharply, and he was consulted less and less on affairs of importance. This imbalance between the two parties grew steadily throughout the spring and summer of 1763, until by July Panin's position had deteriorated so much that he considered retiring from government service altogether.¹³

At this juncture Count Münnich brought his influence to bear in the court struggle. He was just the man the Panin party needed to counter Bestuzhev's growing power. Münnich was the one statesman at the Russian court whose

II, 1762-1774 (St. Petersburg, 1895); P. A. Aleksandrov, *Severnaia sistema* (Moscow, 1914); and, on the origins of the program, K. Rahbek Schmidt, "Wie ist Panins Plan zu einem Nordischen System entstanden?" *Zeitschrift für Slavistik*, 2, no. 3 (1957): 406-22.

10. Judging from Teplov's letter to Panin in late August, the empress had no objections to the reform proposal and was seriously considering its implementation: G. N. Teplov to N. I. Panin, Aug. 29, 1762, Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv drevnikh aktov (Moscow), fond 11, delo 660.

11. But see my article "Nikita Panin's Imperial Council Project and the Struggle of Hierarchy Groups at the Court of Catherine II," *Canadian Slavic Studies*, 4, no. 3 (Fall 1970): 443-63.

12. The change was immediately noted by foreign ambassadors. British envoy Buckingham to Lord Halifax, Moscow, Feb. 14, 1763 (N.S.), *The Despatches and Correspondence of John, Second Earl of Buckinghamshire, Ambassador to the Court of Catherine II of Russia, 1762-1765*, ed. A. Collyer (London, 1900), 1:222 (hereafter *Despatches Buckingham*); Prussian envoy Solms to Frederick II, Moscow, Mar. 31/Apr. 11, 1763, *SIRIO*, 22:49.

13. See especially Solms to Frederick II, St. Petersburg, July 8/19, 1763, *SIRIO*, 22:85-86. On the party split and the problems it was causing for the empress see Catherine's letter to the Senate, June 4, 1763 (N.S.) in Büsching's *Magazin*, vol. 7 (Hamburg, 1774), pp. 247-48; and as seen by the foreign envoys, Solms to Frederick II, St. Petersburg, June 20/July 1, June 24/July 5, July 1/12, July 22/Aug. 2, and July 25/Aug. 5, *SIRIO*, 22:79-84, 94-95, 96, respectively; Buckingham to Halifax, St.

prestige and experience could match Bestuzhev's in every respect. Münnich had ready access to the empress, and she was obviously very fond of the old man.¹⁴ Furthermore, Münnich genuinely sympathized with Panin's desires for a Prussian alliance and central government reform. He did not wish to see that program defeated. Finally, he and Bestuzhev harbored a long-standing personal enmity dating from the time of the Regency in 1740.¹⁵ A Bestuzhev victory in the court struggle could only have led to renewed misfortune for Münnich and his family. It is not surprising, therefore, that in the autumn of 1763, when Panin's position appeared seriously shaken, Münnich sat down to write his "memoirs."¹⁶

The document qualifies as memoirs only in the most superficial sense. Münnich frequently drew examples from his rich experience in Russian government to make a point. But the political nature of the work is best reflected in its original French title, *Ebauche pour donner une idée de la forme*

Petersburg, July 1 and Aug. 22, 1763 (N.S.), *Despatches Buckingham*, 2:43, 56–57, respectively; Swedish envoy Posse to Chancellery President, St. Petersburg, June 20/July 1, June 27/July 8, July 11/22, July 25/Aug. 5, 1763, *Svenska Riksrådet* (hereafter *SRA*), *Muscovitica*, vol. 309, nos. 42, 44, 48, 52, respectively, and Jahnke to Chancellery President, St. Petersburg, Aug. 5/16, 1763, vol. 339, no. 55.

14. Catherine provided him assistance in his writing and gave him a standing invitation to consult with her in cabinet each day at six o'clock. See letter cited in Ley, *Le Maréchal de Münnich*, p. 230. Their correspondence was filled with syrupy professions of mutual esteem, prompting Catherine to write, "Our letters would be like declarations of love, if your patriarchal age did not impart such dignity to them" (*Zapiski grafa Minikha*, p. xxvi).

15. After taking over the government in November 1740 Münnich had ordered Bestuzhev arrested. See Minikh, "Zapiski syna fel'dmarshala," p. 106. If one can believe Büsching, this action must have left serious scars. He relates that after the arrest Bestuzhev incriminated the former favorite, Biron. But when confronted by Biron, Bestuzhev regretted his statements and asked that the protocol record all his previous admissions as false. Then he added: "Ich sage es frei heraus, dass mich der Feldmarschall Münnich angestiftet, und mir meine Freiheit versprochen habe, wenn ich wider den Herzog etwas angeben würde. Die grausame Begegnung, welche mir wiederfahren ist, und gräuliche Drohungen, haben mir diese Beschuldigungen ausgepresset." See "Lebenslauf des vormaligen Grosskanzlers Grafen Alexei Bestuschef-Riumin," *Magazin*, vol. 2 (Hamburg, 1768), p. 419. Later from exile Münnich tried to exculpate himself with lengthy appeals, which Bestuzhev studiously ignored. See especially the letter in N. Kostomarov, "Fel'dmarshal Minikh i ego znachenie v russkoi istorii," *Vestnik Evropy*, 19, no. 9 (1884): 35–37; reproduced in part by Ley (who also notes the Bestuzhev-Münnich enmity), *Le Maréchal de Münnich*, p. 192.

16. The precise date of Münnich's writing cannot be pinpointed. But it clearly belongs to the latter half of 1763. He sent the manuscript to Büsching in late November of that year, and from the accompanying notes one can determine that Münnich submitted his work to Catherine some time before that—that is, at the same time she was resolving the issue of the court struggle. See Büsching's *Wöchentliche Nachrichten* (1774), no. 40, pp. 311–14. Other evidence indicates that the text was still being touched up late in the year. See Academician Miller's letter to Dumaresque (quoted in part below), *Zapiski grafa Minikha*, p. xvi.

du Gouvernement de l'empire de Russie.¹⁷ Academician G. F. Miller, who had the job of assisting Münnich, immediately recognized the political implications of the work, and in the following letter to one of his colleagues expressed apprehension about it: "The Empress has been pleased to appoint me to help General-Fieldmarshal Münnich write his memoirs. It is a very curious work. . . . Although [it] makes very useful reading, I would not wish to be the first to publish it."¹⁸ Miller's anxiety was well founded. Far from being mere memoirs, the writing constituted a carefully constructed brief for all of Nikita Panin's favorite ideas. And there was no doubt that Panin himself contributed directly to its substance.

The major question discussed by Münnich was the establishment of a state council. He spoke, as had Panin in his earlier reform project, of the "gap" that existed between the sovereign and the Senate, and stressed that in the interests of the smooth functioning of government this void should be filled by a council composed of loyal servants of the monarch. Then Münnich proceeded in the body of the work to catalogue the defects of previous eighteenth-century councils. He reserved an especially severe criticism for the Conference, a council designed by Bestuzhev,¹⁹ during Empress Elizabeth's reign: "This new tribunal did not suffice [to fill the "gap" mentioned above], and most important affairs, such as alliances, war, and finances, depended upon the dispositions and intellect of those who had favor; in this fashion the Empress ceased to rule and the form of government was decided at the pleasure of the favorites."²⁰ Nikita Panin had expressed a similar and equally stern criticism of Elizabeth's Conference in his memorandum on the imperial council.²¹

The only council praised by both writers was the one that ruled during the regency of Princess Anna Leopoldovna. Of this council Münnich wrote: "We have seen that the large gap and space between the Supreme Authority

17. Although the place of publication is given as "Copenhagen, 1774," the types used were not to be found in Denmark. The copy in the Danish Royal Library contains the following clarification: "wahrscheinlicher zu Leipzig gedruckt bei Breitkopf, [oder] im Hartnashschen Verlage zu Riga; aber gewiss nicht zu Kopenhagen." For a detailed, if inconclusive, discussion of the publication history see Arved Jürgensohn, "Die Memoiren des Feldmarschalls Münnich und sein *Ebauche*," *Russische Revue* (1886), esp. pp. 329–36.

18. *Zapiski grafa Minikha*, p. xvi.

19. A. P. Bestuzhev-Riumin to Empress Elizabeth, Jan. 19, 1756, Leningradskoe otdelenie, Institut istorii, fond 56, opis' 1, delo 142, listy 249–63. For an interesting analysis of Bestuzhev's actions at this time see Kaplan, *Russia and the Outbreak of the Seven Years' War*, pp. 38–41.

20. Münnich, *Ebauche*, p. 174.

21. "A Conference, an unheard-of monster, was set up: nothing was provided in it, and consequently everything was left to irresponsibility; and having wrested from the Ruler a law to the effect that edicts signed by the Conference would compel execution everywhere, they [the favorites] cut off the Monarch from all business of state and, consequently, also from all knowledge of their activities" (*SIRIO*, 7:207).

and the Senate was perfectly filled by the council or cabinet of this Princess"²²—a modest appraisal, considering that Münnich was prime minister and leader in council at that time. However, the important point was that Panin had evaluated the institution in the same favorable light. Persons appointed to it, he wrote, "had been given ranks and promotions to distinguish them from minions [*pripadochnye ljudi*]," and "that Cabinet . . . , particularly after Biron's fall, had enabled the Monarch to have general care of all matters."²³

It was no mere coincidence that Münnich's critique so curiously matched Panin's reform proposal. At the close of the memoir Münnich referred unmistakably to the source of his ideas:

One of the most enlightened of Your Majesty's ministers did me the honor of saying to me: "There is too great a distance between the supreme authority and the power of the Senate."

It is this distance that I call the gap that must be filled.

He said to me at the same time: "People are of the opinion that Emperor Peter the Great of glorious memory had made and regulated everything concerned with the welfare of the State and that one need only follow it." But he was of the sentiment that although this Monarch had done more than one would think, and that it is even inconceivable that a single man could do all that we see of the great undertakings and foundations of Peter the Great; still, however, there remained much to regulate before seeing everything achieve perfection, and that there were still many things of great importance to do in order to finish what that great Prince had only outlined, his demise having been premature."²⁴

Münnich's interlocutor could only have been Nikita Panin. Panin was the one minister at Catherine's court who had proposed an imperial council to regulate the flow of business between the sovereign and the Senate, to close, as he said, "the gap [interval] between the Monarch and the government—a situation always harmful to the commonweal."²⁵ Panin was the same man who wrote in the council manifesto that "the short life . . . of Great Peter . . . did not allow him to complete the civil and political establishment, yet his successors . . . viewed the mere foundations laid by him as if they were the forms of government."²⁶

22. Münnich, *Ebauche*, p. 150.

23. *SIRIO*, 7:205; English translation from Marc Raeff, ed., *Plans for Political Reform in Imperial Russia, 1730–1905* (Englewood Cliffs, 1966), p. 58.

24. Münnich, *Ebauche*, pp. 184–85.

25. *SIRIO*, 7:205. Ley, *Le Maréchal de Münnich*, p. 256, n. 1, also saw in this passage a reference to Panin, but since Ley had access to only a limited number of Russian sources with the aid of a translator, he did not develop any analysis with respect to court politics.

26. *SIRIO*, 7:205. Another striking similarity in the two projects may be seen in an attack on the powerful Conference secretary, Dmitrii Volkov. Panin wrote that the Empress Elizabeth "turned over work and cares to the arrogant Volkov. Under the pretext

There can be no doubt that Panin and his party stood behind the Münnich memoir. But what made the *Ebauche* dovetail so neatly in the court struggle with Bestuzhev was a second outstanding feature of that writing—its frequent statements in support of a pro-Prussian orientation for Russian foreign policy. Drawing an obvious parallel with the current situation, Münnich told of how his efforts under Princess Anna to get the Prussian treaty renewed had been opposed by evil men who hatched a plot to join with Saxony, Poland, and Austria in order to partition Prussia. In response to this plot he exclaimed to Anna: “I would look with horror upon a treaty that attempted to dethrone and despoil of his estates a Monarch who had been, like his predecessors since the beginning of this century, the most faithful ally of Russia and especially of Peter the Great. The Russian Empire had had more than forty years of onerous wars, and it required peace to put its internal affairs in good order.”²⁷ At another point Münnich sharply criticized Empress Elizabeth’s—or more accurately Bestuzhev’s—war against Prussia, which he condemned as a foolish adventure in which great expenditures were made to no avail.²⁸

In summary, the content of Count Münnich’s *Ebauche*, Panin’s influence on its composition, and the timing of the writing all confirm that the *Ebauche* served as a counterattack from the Panin party on the growing power of Bestuzhev and his young adherents. The author was at pains to demonstrate the deleterious effect on government exercised by Bestuzhev’s 1756 Conference. Beyond that the *Ebauche* represented a detailed brief in support of Panin’s position on foreign policy and a refutation of Bestuzhev’s arguments against a Prussian alliance. Panin had conceived a masterful stroke against his enemies. The respect Catherine held for Münnich, along with his experience and prestige, made him the perfect choice to intervene at this crucial time on behalf of the failing senatorial party.

While it is of course difficult to measure the precise effect of Münnich’s intervention, his main objective, the victory of the Panin party, met with resounding success. By early November that group had completely removed the influence of the young challengers led by Bestuzhev. Instead of getting the

of administering a bureaucratic order that did not exist, this man, in fact, performed the functions of a prime minister; he ruled the ministers themselves, selected and decided affairs on his own and forced ministers to sign them, invoking either the name of the Sovereign or, under cover of Her will, the favorite’s desires. Caprice was the only rule in selecting business for decision” (*SIRIO*, 7:207). Münnich, who could not speak with authority about Elizabeth’s reign, nevertheless reinforced this argument with an example from Peter III’s time: “Les personnes en faveur, Melgounov, Goudowitz, et surtout Wolkow, qui faisait la fonction de secrétaire privé, qui maniait la plume et avait l’oreille du maître, étaient fort au-dessus à l’égard des suffrages de tous ceux qui étaient membres de la Commission, de sorte que ce que Wolkow trouvait convenir faisait la forme du gouvernement sous l’empereur Pierre III” (*Ebauche*, pp. 182–83).

27. Münnich, *Ebauche*, pp. 146–47.

28. Münnich, *Ebauche*, pp. 171–72.

council they hoped would dilute Bestuzhev's authority, the Panin party simply took over all of the important offices.²⁹ Among other powerful appointments, Nikita Panin received the post of senior member of the Foreign Affairs Collegium (i.e., *de facto* grand chancellor) and was charged to conclude a new alliance with Prussia.³⁰ Other members of the Panin party also received promotions.³¹ Count Münnich's son Ernst, who had shared his father's long exile, was given the lucrative post of chief of the country's customs houses.³² The field marshal himself, now in his eighties, continued to direct the construction of Baltic port facilities until his death four years later. At the same time, Bestuzhev and the Orlovs were excluded from further influence on policy,³³ and early in 1764 Bestuzhev suffered disgrace and went into retirement on his estates.

It may be argued that the Panin party would have won this victory even without Münnich's assistance. The evidence does not allow a clear answer to that question, nor is one necessary. The issue here is not the outcome of the court struggle but the political nature and intent of Münnich's writing. The court struggle merely provides a context within which his memoirs can be

29. Catherine did, however, institute the other reform proposed by both Panin and Münnich. In December 1763 she ordained the division of the Governing Senate into six departments, each handling particular categories of state business. Two departments were to be located in Moscow. See *Polnoe sobranie zakonov rossiiskii imperii* (hereafter *PSZ*), 1st ser., vol. 16, no. 11,989.

30. The empress was compelled to end her skillful balancing of the two parties. News of the death of the Polish King Augustus reached St. Petersburg in October, and Russia had to be prepared for the succession fight with a consistent and effective foreign policy unhindered by party disputes. Catherine had been persuaded to a pro-Prussian orientation and therefore placed Panin in command. Although S. M. Solov'ev, *Istoriia Rossii s drevneishikh vremen*, vol. 13, bk. 25 (Moscow, 1965), pp. 195, 306n., indicates the date of this change from a Senate order as November 5 (O.S.), diplomatic reports confirm that it occurred at least a week earlier. Solms to Frederick II, St. Petersburg, Oct. 28/Nov. 8, 1763, *SIRIO*, 22:143-45; Jahnke to Chancellery President, St. Petersburg, Oct. 28/Nov. 8, 1763, *SRa*, *Muscovitica*, vol. 339, no. 79. Panin was also put in charge of the Navy Department, given access with the general procurator to all state secrets, and consulted regularly on internal affairs. See Jahnke to Chancellery President, St. Petersburg, Oct. 28/Nov. 8 and Oct. 31/Nov. 11, 1763, *SRa*, *Muscovitica*, vol. 339, nos. 80, 81; Solms to Frederick II, St. Petersburg, Nov. 25/Dec. 6, 1763, *SIRIO*, 22:168; Catherine to N. I. Panin, Nov. 23 (O.S.), 1763, "Pis'ma i zapiski imperatritsy Ekateriny II k grafu Nikite Ivanovichu Paninu," *Chteniiia v imperatorskom obshchestve istorii i drevnostei rossiiskikh*, vol. 2, pt. 2 (Moscow, 1863), p. 3; also Catherine's papers in *SIRIO*, 7:349, 354-97 *passim*.

31. Prince Nikolai Repnin, Panin's nephew by marriage, was appointed plenipotentiary minister to Warsaw. Solms to Frederick II, St. Petersburg, Oct. 14/25, 1763, *SIRIO*, 22:139. Adam Olsufiev was raised to senator when the Senate was reorganized shortly thereafter according to Panin's plan. See *PSZ*, vol. 16, no. 11,989.

32. *PSZ*, vol. 16, no. 11,955.

33. They were allowed so little knowledge of the Prussian negotiations that Panin could assure Solms that Bestuzhev and Orlov would read about the treaty in the newspapers. Solms to Frederick II, St. Petersburg, Oct. 21/Nov. 1, 1763, *SIRIO*, 22:146.

understood. It should not be forgotten that Münnich's *Ebauche* had a contemporary significance which outweighed considerations of memoir writing. The document's usefulness as memoirs can only be assessed with an understanding of its original political purpose. For, far from being mere memoirs, the work constituted the aging field marshal's last foray into Russian court politics. It was a partisan tract designed to shift the balance in the court struggle and facilitate Nikita Panin's rise to power during the first years of Catherine the Great's reign.