

Thomas Jefferson to Alexander I of Russia, August 29, 1808, Draft, from The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes. Federal Edition. Collected and Edited by Paul Leicester Ford.

TO THE EMPEROR OF RUSSIA J. MSS.

United States, Aug. 29, 1808.

Great and good Friend and Emperor, —Desirous of promoting useful intercourse & good understanding between your majesty's subjects & the citizens of the U S, and especially to cultivate the friendship of Y. M., I have appointed William Short, one of our distinguished citizens, to be in quality of Minister Plenipo. of the U S, the bearer to you of assurances of their sincere friendship, and of their desire to maintain with Y. M. & your subjects the strictest relations of amity & commerce: He will explain to Y. M. the peculiar position of these States, separated by a wide ocean from the powers of Europe, with interests and pursuits distinct from theirs, and consequently without the motives or the aptitudes for taking part in the associations or oppositions which a different system of interests produces among them; he is charged to assure Y. M. more particularly of our purpose to observe a faithful neutrality towards the contending powers, in the war to which your majesty is a party, rendering to all the services & courtesies of friendship, and praying for the re-establishment of peace & right among them; and we entertain an entire confidence that this just & faithful conduct on the part of the U S will strengthen the friendly dispositions you have manifested towards them, and be a fresh motive with so just & magnanimous a sovereign to enforce, by the high influence of your example, the respect due to the character & the rights of a peaceable nation. I beseech you, great and good friend & emperor, to give entire credence to whatever he shall say to you on the part of

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these States, & most all of when he shall assure you of their cordial esteem & respect for Y. M's. person & character, praying God always to have you in his safe & holy keeping.¹

1 On the subject of this mission, Jefferson wrote to the Secretary of the Treasury:

“ Monticello, Aug. 30, 08.

“ Dear Sir,— * * * Mr. Madison & myself on repeated consultations, (and some of the other members of the executive expressed the same opinion before they left Washington,) have concluded that the mission to Petersburg should not be delayed. Being special, and not permanent, the waiting the meeting of the Senate is less important &, if we waited that it could not go till spring, and we know not what this summer & the ensuing winter may produce. We think secrecy also important, & that the mission should be as little known as possible, till it is in Petersburg, which could not be, if known to the Senate. Mr. Short goes therefore in the aviso from Philadelphia, to be engaged for Sept. 15. He is peculiarly distressed by sickness at sea, & of course more so the smaller the vessel. I think, therefore, the occasion justifies the enlargement of our vessel somewhat beyond what might be necessary for a mere aviso. The season, too, by the time of her return, might render it desirable for safety, which circumstance may be mentioned in your instructions to the collector, to prevent his suspicions of the real ground. I salute you with affection & respect.”