

# Revisiting Napoleon's Continental System

Local, Regional and European Experiences

Edited by Katherine B. Aaslestad  
and Johan Joor

War, Culture and Society, 1750-1850



*War, Culture and Society, 1750–1850*

Series Editors: **Rafe Blaufarb** (Tallahassee, USA), **Alan Forrest** (York, UK), and **Karen Hagemann** (Chapel Hill, USA)

Editorial Board: **Michael Broers** (Oxford, UK), **Christopher Bayly** (Cambridge, UK), **Richard Bessel** (York, UK), **Sarah Chambers** (Minneapolis, USA), **Laurent Dubois** (Durham, USA), **Etienne François** (Berlin, Germany), **Janet Hartley** (London, UK), **Wayne Lee** (Chapel Hill, USA), **Jane Rendall** (York, UK), **Reinhard Stauber** (Klagenfurt, Austria)

*Titles include:*

Katherine B. Aaslestad and Johan Joor (*editors*)  
REVISITING NAPOLEON'S CONTINENTAL SYSTEM  
Local, Regional and European Experiences

Richard Bessel, Nicholas Guyatt and Jane Rendall (*editors*)  
WAR, EMPIRE AND SLAVERY, 1770–1830

Eveline G. Bouwers  
PUBLIC PANTHEONS IN REVOLUTIONARY EUROPE  
Comparing Cultures of Remembrance, c. 1790–1840

Michael Broers, Agustin Guimera and Peter Hick (*editors*)  
THE NAPOLEONIC EMPIRE AND THE NEW EUROPEAN POLITICAL CULTURE

Gavin Daly  
THE BRITISH SOLDIER IN THE PENINSULAR WAR  
Encounters with Spain and Portugal, 1808–1814

Alan Forrest, Etienne François and Karen Hagemann (*editors*)  
WAR MEMORIES  
The Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars in Modern European Culture

Alan Forrest, Karen Hagemann and Jane Rendall (*editors*)  
SOLDIERS, CITIZENS AND CIVILIANS  
Experiences and Perceptions of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, 1790–1820

Alan Forrest and Peter H. Wilson (*editors*)  
THE BEE AND THE EAGLE  
Napoleonic France and the End of the Holy Roman Empire, 1806

Rasmus Glenthøj and Morten Nordhagen Ottosen  
EXPERIENCES OF WAR AND NATIONALITY IN DENMARK AND NORWAY,  
1807–1815

Karen Hagemann, Gisela Mettele and Jane Rendall (*editors*)  
GENDER, WAR AND POLITICS  
Transatlantic Perspectives, 1755–1830

Leighton James  
WITNESSING THE REVOLUTIONARY AND NAPOLEONIC WARS IN GERMAN  
CENTRAL EUROPE

Catriona Kennedy  
NARRATIVES OF THE REVOLUTIONARY AND NAPOLEONIC WARS  
Military and Civilian Experience in Britain and Ireland

Catriona Kennedy and Matthew McCormack (*editors*)  
SOLDIERING IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND, 1750–1850  
Men of Arms

Ralph Kingston  
BUREAUCRATS AND BOURGEOIS SOCIETY  
Office Politics and Individual Credit, France 1789–1848

Mark Lawrence  
SPAIN'S FIRST CARLIST WAR, 1833–40

Kevin Linch  
BRITAIN AND WELLINGTON'S ARMY  
Recruitment, Society and Tradition, 1807–1815

Pierre Serna, Antonino De Francesco and Judith Miller  
REPUBLICS AT WAR, 1776–1840  
Revolutions, Conflicts and Geopolitics in Europe and the Atlantic World

Marie-Cécile Thoral  
FROM VALMY TO WATERLOO  
France at War, 1792–1815

Mark Wishon  
GERMAN FORCES AND THE BRITISH ARMY  
Interactions and Perceptions, 1742–1815

Christine Wright  
WELLINGTON'S MEN IN AUSTRALIA  
Peninsular War Veterans and the Making of Empire c.1820–40

---

**War, Culture and Society, 1750–1850**  
**Series Standing Order ISBN 978-0-230-54532-8 (hardback)**  
**978-0-230-54533-5 (paperback)**  
*(outside North America only)*

You can receive future titles in this series as they are published by placing a standing order. Please contact your bookseller or, in case of difficulty, write to us at the address below with your name and address, the title of the series and one of the ISBNs quoted above.

Customer Services Department, Macmillan Distribution Ltd, Houndmills,  
Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS, England

---

# Revisiting Napoleon's Continental System

Local, Regional and European Experiences

Edited by

Katherine B. Aaslestad

*Professor of History, West Virginia University, USA*

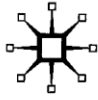
and

Johan Joor

*Honorary Fellow, International Institute of Social History, The Netherlands*

palgrave  
macmillan





Editorial matter and selection © Katherine B. Aaslestad and Johan Joor 2015  
All chapters © respective authors 2015

All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication may be made without written permission.

No portion of this publication may be reproduced, copied or transmitted save with written permission or in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, or under the terms of any licence permitting limited copying issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency, Saffron House, 6–10 Kirby Street, London EC1N 8TS.

Any person who does any unauthorized act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

The authors have asserted their rights to be identified as the authors of this work in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

First published 2015 by  
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN

Palgrave Macmillan in the UK is an imprint of Macmillan Publishers Limited, registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS.

Palgrave Macmillan in the US is a division of St Martin's Press LLC, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

Palgrave Macmillan is the global academic imprint of the above companies and has companies and representatives throughout the world.

Palgrave® and Macmillan® are registered trademarks in the United States, the United Kingdom, Europe and other countries.

ISBN 978–1–137–34556–1

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources. Logging, pulping and manufacturing processes are expected to conform to the environmental regulations of the country of origin.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Revisiting Napoleon's continental system : local, regional and European experiences / [edited by] Katherine B. Aaslestad, Johan Joor.

pages cm. — (War, culture and society, 1750-1850)

Summary: "Napoleonic warfare spread to the high seas, harbors and marketplaces across Europe and the Atlantic through the Continental System. This volume addresses the illicit commerce, new merchant networks, 'daily life', and tensions with neutral states generated by Anglo-French economic warfare. It also reveals the contradictions inherent in the Napoleonic Empire - at once rational and progressive, but also coercive and exploitative. Regional and urban case studies offer a more complete understanding of the significance of economic warfare during the Napoleonic era, and explore the experiences and consequences of the conflict through several key themes: a re-evaluation of the historiography of the Continental System, the uneven power triangle of the French, British and neutral powers, and the strategies of merchants and smugglers to adapt to or circumvent the system. Transnational case studies underscore the vulnerability and ingenuity of Europeans as they faced transformative social and economic challenges."—Provided by publisher.

ISBN 978–1–137–34556–1 (hardback)

1. Continental System (Economic blockade) 2. Napoleonic Wars, 1800–1815—Economic aspects. 3. France—History—Consulate and First Empire, 1799–1815. 4. Europe—Commerce—History. 5. Europe—Economic conditions—1789–1900. 6. Europe—Politics and government—1789–1815. I. Aaslestad, Katherine. II. Joor, Johan.

HF1543.R49 2014

337.44—dc23

2014025898

Typeset by MPS Limited, Chennai, India.

# 14

## Riga Export Trade at the Time of the Continental Blockade (1807–1812)

*Anita Čerpinska*

By the end of the Great Northern War, Russia emerged a Baltic power. Riga became a Russian city in 1710 when it capitulated to the Russian army. As a consequence of the Treaty of Nystad in 1721, Riga was incorporated into the Empire as the administrative centre of the Vidzeme Government and became an important stronghold in the Russian frontier. After the city recovered from the dual destruction of the war and the Black Death, it experienced considerable growth due to the almost uninterrupted increase in trade. In 1809 Vidzeme Professor Johann Petri of the Erfurt Grammar school described Riga:

Trade brings wealth and life to Riga ... Money calls, it allures and draws one here ... One can easily go broke here and prosper with the same ease ... Most people spend all they earn and choose a way of life whereby they can barely make both ends meet. Only some plan ahead and put aside some money to be able to survive later: they count on the endless stream of trade that brings them its treasures from day to day ... Everyone can earn money with ease unless they are stripped of reason, competence and knowledge. Money is easily the cheapest commodity, and one worries little about the future.<sup>1</sup>

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the Baltic Sea comprised 85 per cent of Russia's foreign trade.<sup>2</sup> Despite privileges granted to St Petersburg to develop its status as an imperial port, Riga remained Russia's second largest export port to western states. By 1800 Riga, with a population of roughly 30,000 inhabitants, supported a substantial amount of Russia's export trade. Commercial growth since 1750 generated a demand for labour in the city, and consequently in the summer season Riga attracted workers from neighbouring regions. Every year the city attracted new residents, and during exceptionally favourable conditions the number of incomers could make up even one-third of the total number of city inhabitants.

Before 1806 Riga encompassed 20 per cent of Russia's export in the Baltic Sea and 20 to 24 per cent worth of Russia's total export. The Daugava River region played a significant role in ensuring the well-being of Riga since the export goods came to the city down the river. Prior to 1806 two-thirds of Riga's export goods comprised of the so-called 'technical crops': hemp, flax, linseed (for sowing and oil) and hempseed. If 10 to 15 per cent of Riga's export comprised of crop products, about as much consisted of timber. In some years Riga provided more than half of the corn, flax, hempseed and linseed and 30 per cent of the hemp and timber that Russia exported. In the time period from the 1760s until 1800 the amount of export goods (flax, hemp, linseed and spars) brought to Riga from Poland, Lithuania, Belarus and other inner-Russian territories continued to increase.<sup>3</sup> The last decades of the eighteenth century also saw an increase in the prices of export flax and hemp indicating stable demand.

As an importer Riga remained a local centre covering only 5 per cent of Russia's imports as it supplied imported goods to the neighbouring areas of Kurzeme and Vidzeme and to some extent Lithuanian and Belarus territories. The principal imported goods invariably were salt (20 per cent of the import of Riga) and herring. The inner-Russian governments provided little salt to the Baltic region, and the territory of present-day Latvia depended on foreign salt deliveries.

The main Russian export goods from St Petersburg included bread, iron, hemp and flax. The amount of technical crops and half-processed materials in the export had gradually increased since the 1770s and they constituted two-thirds of Russian exports, whereas corn products formed one-fifth of exports in the beginning of the nineteenth century. It is important to note that the field of export trade was almost equally divided between England and Russia, and in some years English merchants' share of Russia's exports was bigger than that of the local merchants.<sup>4</sup> Thus, in the years between 1802 and 1804 Russia's ports were visited by 2100 English ships (20.1 per cent of the total number of ships), and their total storage capacity was 217,503 lasts, or 37.7 per cent of the total tonnage.<sup>5</sup>

To a great extent, life in Riga depended on trade. A large portion of the burghers of Riga engaged in commerce, whereas the common people laboured in the port or warehouses and transit trade. Historians estimate that up to 20 per cent of the residents of Riga were involved in trade.<sup>6</sup> Otto Hoon, a local doctor, wrote,

Trade is highly respected here. Many people of different classes, unrelenting activity, joint application of forces and means bring about reflection on the value of trade, on increasing of the common good with the help of trade and on the influence of trade on the arts and sciences. Trade is a creative force that turns the local sandy meadows into merry fields and

gardens, which brought Riga city to a blooming state, which feeds and spreads the arts and sciences and which brought Vidzeme out of a wild and barbaric state ...<sup>7</sup>

Russian regulations in Riga forbade foreigners to trade among themselves, therefore Riga burghers were mostly involved as middlemen. The Manifest of 1807 enabled foreigners to gain residency in Russia as well as the rights of a Riga burgher. Riga merchants specialized in exports of certain goods and several dozens of wealthy merchants held up to 80 per cent of the turnover. In most cases, they bought export goods from suppliers and sold them to representatives of the Western European companies engaged in export. The family of Barclay de Tolly was one of the leading families in Riga's timber trade and Russian Field Marshal Michael Barclay de Tolly, who became War Minister in 1810, devoted much attention to fortifying Riga against possible attack by Napoleon.

According to the Riga Trade Law of 1765, all the principal export goods in Riga had to be sorted, weighed or measured, and packed. All goods entering the city by barge or by road had to be inspected, weighed, sorted and stored.<sup>8</sup> This ensured earnings for Riga merchants and auxiliary workers though it delayed the turnover of goods and increased prices. In addition, the city collected various duties for the state or itself – export duty, duty from vehicles, duty for the benefit of the city weighing room, duty for trade agents, duty for auxiliary workers, duty for destitute people and so on. Thus, the well-being of the entire city depended heavily on commerce. For the duration of the eighteenth century the value of Riga's exports exceeded by several times over its imports in bringing wealth to the city, promoting Riga's reputation as an expensive and lavish city.

### Implementation of the Continental Blockade

As in Russia generally, the Continental Blockade in Riga was implemented at the end of 1807. On 17 November 1807, the Riga Stock Exchange published and enforced the *ukase* (proclamation by the tsar that had the force of law) of Tsar Alexander I regarding the break in relations with England that had transpired on 7 November 1807.<sup>9</sup> From 11 November to 13 November, 49 ships managed to leave Riga; 41 of them were English.<sup>10</sup> Most of them carried goods (hemp, flax, linseed) purchased by English companies and departed straight for the English ports. The *ukase* provided for creating a special Liquidation Commission in Riga that was subject to the Liquidation Commission of St Petersburg. The Commission consisted of the Riga military governor, a town councillor, a court councillor, a guild alderman and two local merchants.<sup>11</sup> In March 1808 John Mitchell and William Cumming – representatives chosen by the English – joined the Riga Commission.

The Riga Liquidation Commission was responsible for implementing the embargo. These tasks included the sequestration of English ships and goods and handing over perishable goods for public trade. Along with reviewing the complaints of foreign and Russian merchants related to imposing the embargo, the Commission gathered information on the English in the city, their shares and bills in the Russian Empire. It also gathered information on the claims of Russian subjects against the English outside Russia who did not have offices or properties in Russia. The Riga Liquidation Commission was responsible for goods not only in the port of Riga but also in the ports of Tallinn, Haapsalu, Ventspils and Liepāja.

After 14 December 1807 it was forbidden to buy or take as a pledge English immovable and non-goods property.<sup>12</sup> People whose companies had English shares or bills were to inform the Riga Liquidation Commission, a practice that only began in May 1808. An order to stop business with English goods and properties was sent by the trade court to notaries, timber graders, measurers, carrier and scale supervisors, hemp scutchers and carriers of salt and wine.<sup>13</sup>

The English had to submit information to the Commission regarding their properties in the territory of Russia. Although they did not hurry to submit their statements, those who wanted to leave Russia were forced to submit them in order to receive travel documents. Following the publication of the *ukase*, English merchants registered in Riga filed a claim with the trade court. They were willing to present their goods, but only if they were considered as guests that had immunity granted to their personal property by Russia.<sup>14</sup> Their claim did not go further than the board of the Vidzeme government, but the English were soon excluded from Russia's list of 'guests', and the money they had deposited went to the Riga Liquidation Commission.<sup>15</sup>

Table 14.1 presents a review of goods sequestered at storehouses at the port. It was prepared by the Riga port customs and submitted to the Riga Liquidation Commission in February 1808. Timber represents the greatest portion of the goods. Technical crops made up a comparatively small proportion of the confiscated goods. Russian merchants submitted purchasing documents to the Riga Liquidation Commission for some of the goods. If payments had been made before the embargo had been imposed, the Riga Liquidation Commission made the decision to give the goods to the claimant.<sup>16</sup> If the goods in Russia were ordered by the English, the Riga Liquidation Commission charged to the claimant a certain percentage of the cost of the goods for removing the sequester and added the money to its budget.<sup>17</sup>

By 1810 Russia started to hastily secure its western border for the impending war against Napoleon. At that moment it turned out that there was not enough timber in Riga and its expense and added costs associated with delivery would mean additional expenditures for the state and require lots of time. For this reason, in the summer of 1810 the War Ministry made the decision to take over the timber (particularly logs and oak wood) sequestered from the English in Riga and use it for the construction of city fortifications.<sup>18</sup>



Table 14.1 Companies – owners of the goods sequestrated in Riga

Company	Registered as 'guests' in Riga	Goods (in RBL)	
		Timber	Technical crops
John Morrison	John Morrison	16,204	493
Mitchell & Co.	John Mitchell	4353	0
Hay, Pierson & Co.	James Pierson, Robert Hay	1314	0
Cumming, Fenton & Co.	John Cumming, Patric Cumming, William Cumming	5652	0
Renny, Petri & Co.	Georg Renny, William Petrie	1068	0
Ramsay & Garry	James Ramsay, Nicholas Garry	1991	0
Hill Jacobi & Co.	James Hill, J.M. Jacobi	402	843
Caesar Corsellis	Caesar Corsellis	1201	879
<b>Total</b>		<b>32,185</b>	<b>2215</b>

Source: LSHA, Fund 673, Entry 1, File 241, 106–34.

### The Course of the Continental Blockade

Although general historical accounts of Riga assert the considerable negative influence of the Continental Blockade on the city's trade, very little special research has been carried out regarding the Blockade and its consequences. In fact, only a few publications by specialists of commercial history address the period.<sup>19</sup> Other research examines Riga's trade at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries or the history of trade professions. Thus, there are more questions than answers about exports from Riga during the time of the Continental Blockade.

There are a few mathematical indicators that show the general tendencies. As an example, one could mention the number of ships coming to the port of Riga and the value of the exported goods, as shown in Table 14.2. When analysing this data it must be taken into consideration that the value was assessed in assignation rubles, therefore the exchange fluctuations (for example in 1811) are reflected in the decrease or increase of value. Besides, the customs officials in Riga did not keep strict records of the incoming ships, especially those with ballast. Regardless of these facts, there was a considerable decrease in the number of incoming ships during the time of the Continental Blockade. This cannot be said about the value of export – it saw a considerable decrease only in 1808 (just like in the whole of Russia) but increased in other years.

A different picture unfolds when looking at the amount of Riga's key export goods that were shipped abroad during the Continental Blockade in comparison to the five years prior to the Blockade, as shown in Table 14.3.

Table 14.2 Dynamics of Riga export trade, 1801–17

Year	Number of incoming ships	Export value (in thousands RBL)
1801	1006	14,324
1802	1128	12,531
1803	1178	11,872
1804	1151	12,167
1805	2096	16,513
1806	2016	15,547
1807	1154	11,525
1808	284	5882
1809	745	19,596
1810	436	10,293
1811	372	9809
1812	553	17,852
1813	637	16,352
1814	765	27,943
1815	899	28,120
1816	947	15,899
1817	1774	71,399

Source: LSHA, Fund 4038, Entry 2, File 1074a, leaf 182.

Table 14.3 Riga exports (average data per year in thousands of units)

Period	Hemp		Flax		Linseed		Corn	Potash	Logs	Spars
	Ship pounds		For sowing		For oil		Lasts	Ship pounds	Pieces	
			Barrels		Barrels					
1801–06	120.3	65.9	50.2	103.1	45.4	1.63	34.2	4.83		
1807–12	109.2	51.4	21.8	74	7.9	1.67	10	1.44		

Source: Дорошенко, *Торговля Риги*, 27.

Here, a decrease in the export amounts of almost all goods can be observed, but it is the most apparent for timber and corn. Although interrupted relations with England and the disturbance in trade caused by economic warfare decreased the amount of exported corn, by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the amount of Russia's corn export fluctuated because years of rich and poor harvests followed each other repeatedly. Also, the demand for corn in the European market remained unstable. During

the Continental Blockade, Russia experienced state-imposed restrictions on bread export. It is significant that the price of corn in the Riga market did not fall sharply because the territory of Latvia experienced several poor harvests during the Continental Blockade. Also, the country nobility preferred to use part of the corn for distilling spirits; therefore, there was a shortage of corn in the market.

The timber trade was the most disrupted by the Continental Blockade, but not only because of the English embargo. Contracts about the export of timber were concluded several years in advance to accumulate a sufficient amount of timber in the storehouses since deliveries by water and road were not reliable and often late.<sup>20</sup> Timber from the most distant governments arrived in Riga no sooner than in the second year after their harvest. Additional expenses in transit and storage could not be avoided, so merchants often took loans to cover the expenses associated with the timber trade. This investment usually paid for itself as timber brought great profit. Due to loans, customs and transporting expenses, foreigners paid for exported timber six times as much as the initial purchase price. For example, in 1800, 100 spars cost 900 silver rubles when harvested but still in the forest, yet they cost a foreign merchant 3390 silver rubles by the time they arrived in Riga. With the existing trade restrictions, the big timber merchants did not know how much timber they would be able to sell; therefore, it was complicated to determine how much timber should be purchased. Right after the beginning of the Continental Blockade there appeared a surplus in timber and prices fell sharply. Due to the decline in shipping as a result of the Blockade, the surplus of certain kinds of timber recurred also in the following years.<sup>21</sup>

The decrease in the export amounts of flax and hemp is also obvious although not that considerable. This can be explained by the long tradition of flax and hemp export in Riga. Before and after the Continental Blockade, Riga surpassed other Russian ports in the amount of exported flax. Flax from Riga was superior in quantity and quality; it was reputed to be the best flax exported from Russia. The constant demand for flax in Riga permitted several governments (Vidzeme, Pskov and Smolensk) to specialize in growing flax, and for many people in these regions, flax was the primary source of their living. There was constant demand in the European market for the relatively cheap Russian flax that this country could supply in great amounts. 'Who knows not the famous flax of Riga?', exclaims Petri in his description of Vidzeme.<sup>22</sup> The principal port for hemp export remained St Petersburg, but one-third of the total amount of hemp passed through Riga where it was brought from more distant governments within inner Russia. Hemp was also in constant demand in the European market because ships needed hemp ropes and tows.

When looking at the recipients of Riga's export goods before and after the Continental Blockade, as shown in Table 14.4, one can see that prior to the

Blockade, England was a pronounced leader, followed by Denmark, Holland and the German states. The 10.3 per cent share of Riga's export market attributed to England during the Continental Blockade is actually formed by the exports of 1807 and 1812 when the Continental Blockade was either not yet implemented or no longer observed. During the years of the Continental Blockade, the United States became the biggest purchaser of Riga's goods instead of England. In certain years it was the biggest buyer of hemp, linseed, potash and iron. By the end of the Continental Blockade, England resumed its place as the dominant buyer. It is possible, of course, that trade with the United States provided a cover for ongoing trade with England. There are several references that suggest that due to its location, Riga played a significant role in illegal trade with England during the Continental Blockade.<sup>23</sup> For example, it was no secret in St Petersburg that sailing in the Baltic Sea (controlled by the Royal Navy) was almost impossible without a licence from the English government. It is possible that many ships that were supposedly en route to Sweden (especially Gothenburg, known as an English smuggling centre) and North America were in fact headed to England with the usual Russian goods. This view is reinforced when one considers that the number of ships officially heading to Gothenburg was near 200 in 1812 but only 20 in 1813.<sup>24</sup>

Before the Continental Blockade, Sweden was an active buyer of hemp and rye, but at the time of the Blockade it extended its interest to timber and flax. Also, the role of Holland in Riga's export increased, and in 1810, for example, exports to Holland constituted half of the total export amount. In the years before the Continental Blockade, Holland purchased a comparatively small part of Riga's hemp and flax in contrast to purchases of corn and timber. During the Continental Blockade, however, the Dutch together with the Americans became the main purchasers of flax and hemp.

Analysing the amounts of export by year, we can see that there was a considerable drop in the exports of all the principal export goods in the beginning of the Continental Blockade, as shown in Table 14.5, whereas the export of some goods – flax, linseed and hemp – set records in 1809. For example, 856,000 poods of hemp were exported to Holland, 734,000 poods of hemp were exported to the United States and 215,000 poods of hemp were exported to Italy. Other goods saw no such increase. The export

Table 14.4 Countries – recipients of Riga export goods (per cent of the total amount)

Period	England	Holland	France	Spain	Portugal	Sweden	Denmark	German states	America
1801–06	35.6	12.5	2	7.8	6.4	7.3	15.9	12.1	0
1807–12	10.3	17.8	0.3	5.5	3	26.1	3	8	23.7

Source: Дорошенко, *Торговля Риги*, 28.

of corn, timber and hempseeds underwent a steady crisis that lasted for the duration of the Continental Blockade. Export of timber almost stopped in 1808 and 1809. In other years it existed only due to the purchases of a few countries: in 1810, Holland and Prussia and in 1811, Holland and Sweden.

On one hand, fluctuations in the prices of goods have not been studied sufficiently so far. Provisional data indicates no fall in prices for some of the principal export goods at Riga Customs. On the other hand, difficulties with selling more expensive kinds of timber have been noted. For instance, due to the large supply of spars, customers did not want to pay the price listed by the merchants.

Meanwhile, prices in Riga's local market during the Continental Blockade have barely been studied and cannot be analysed.<sup>25</sup> It is clear that a general increase in the price of corn and corn products in the local market took place in 1805. It reached the highest point in the first half of 1808 after which prices fell gradually. A similar increase of prices in the beginning of the Continental Blockade can also be observed for other goods, like salted fish and butter. The impact of the Continental Blockade on the local market remains ambiguous. For example, salt experienced a considerable increase in price; its price rose several times in 1808 compared to the six years before the Continental Blockade.<sup>26</sup> This was caused by the substantial drop in salt imports, which was especially striking at the beginning of the Blockade. Salt import returned to pre-Blockade levels only after 1812, as shown by Table 14.6. The steps the Russian government took to provide the Baltic region with salt and its attempts to step up production of salt locally had little effect on the salt crisis in the Baltic. During the War of 1812, Riga's military government tried to prevent Riga salt from reaching Kurzeme, an area occupied by Napoleon's army. As a result, there was a shortage of salt, and its price rose so high that common people could not afford it. Salt became rare and valuable, an object for barter and begging.<sup>27</sup>

In the local market, Riga's principal export goods – hemp and flax – experienced a temporary fall in prices in the first half of 1808 – about one-fourth compared to the average indicators of the previous years. This was due to the fact that in 1808 supply to Riga of some sorts of flax and hemp remained at the level of previous years, whereas the amount of exports fell considerably. Relations between the local market and the Continental Blockade are a matter for separate study since most of the export goods arrived in Riga in transit from inner-Russian governments. Thus, price fluctuations in the local market might not be related to the Continental Blockade. There are some references available, for example the memoirs of a Kurzeme landlord, Ulrich Schlippenbach, which indicate increased poverty in Kurzeme during the trade ban.<sup>28</sup> In 1810 the Kurzeme nobility turned to the government with complaints about the damage caused by the export ban, but as of yet there are no studies regarding this topic.



Table 14.5 Export via Riga

Year	Corn										Timber				
	Flax	Hemp	Linseed for sowing	Oil linseed	Hempseed	Wheat	Rye	Barley	Oat	Round timber	Boards	Logs	Oakwood		
	poods	poods	chetverts	chetverts	chetverts	chetverts	chetverts	chetverts	chetverts	chetverts	pieces	pieces	pieces		
1800	687	758	8	63	11	57	30	1	0	9	35	41	98		
1801	494	1293	20	24	4	130	272	21	45	5	13	25	48		
1802	461	846	38	39	15	53	384	101	49	6	63	32	140		
1803	590	926	36	74	20	33	407	79	38	6	144	33	88		
1804	823	1053	48	107	12	90	228	30	3	8	139	49	73		
1805	828	960	39	100	21	232	838	52	14	2	163	30	90		
1806	675	976	16	49	20	48	887	19	1	3	132	40	63		
1807	684	1122	14	59	3	17	182	0	32	6	37	34	102		
1808	416	740	10	30	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	5		
1809	773	2448	35	61	0	2	0	0	0	0	9	0	42		
1810	455	815	5	75	0	26	57	6	0	0	7	3	17		
1811	247	589	14	22	0	13	86	9	0	2	10	16	32		
1812	498	614	7	31	0	19	236	37	5	0	5	4	12		
1813	394	252	31	26	0	16	117	26	47	1	57	10	11		
1814	563	490	32	57	12	5	209	11	0	2	89	31	47		
1815	404	664	43	34	4	16	120	15	19	3	136	31	71		
1816	203	331	2	42	5	29	176	26	0	2	23	21	47		
1817	594	564	54	104	22	136	997	102	140	4	80	16	26		
1818	549	782	48	81	9	82	283	153	369	4	132	22	30		

Source: Grasmann, *Daugava un Rīgas eksports*, table 2.

Table 14.6 Salt imports (in lasts)

Year	Type of salt				Price in Riga	
	Spanish	French	Coarse salt from Liverpool	Table salt from Liverpool	Number of loads	(kopecks for pound)
1800	2859	0	1042	1903	73	2 to 4
1801	217	964	997	4509	95	3 to 4
1802	6591	1402	1045	5459	198	2 to 4
1803	5320	151	1025	3520	156	1.5 to 2
1804	2991	151	726	2954	102	2
1805	4055	373	938	5986	153	no data
1806	2207	205	824	7495	142	2
1807	2914	94	780	5718	119	2 to 3
1808	281	38	25	320	16	3 to 35
1809	2208	847	0	1639	56	8.5 to 35
1810	1148	0	48	1148	63	no data
1811	1253	0	0	1367	54	no data
1812	553	88	94	1754	42	no data
1813	3005	0	798	7300	191	no data
1814	2321	478	777	2518	96	no data
1815	4873	293	671	4888	152	no data
1816	7437	922	316	1096	139	no data
1817	4000	487	91	1017	94	no data
1818	5438	1019	740	2589	157	no data

Source: LSHA, Fund 1858, Entry 1, Files 602–3.

### Social Consequences of the Continental Blockade

Among the common people, the ones who suffered the most during the Continental Blockade were those employed in the declining professions related to timber and corn preparation for export and those related to processing and storing the incoming commercial goods bound for England. These included spar and oak wood graders, salt carriers, and salt and corn measurers. Spar graders tried to solve their livelihood problems by breaching the restrictions of their occupation. Although prohibited by Riga trade regulations, they tried selling the timber they graded. They also objected to expectations that they contribute to such public works as cutting ice in the Daugava River, which the Riga Town Council tried to impose on them.<sup>29</sup> It should be mentioned that at the end of the eighteenth century some spar

graders had acceded to the ranks of merchants. For many, however, their savings were not sufficient to survive the crisis caused by the Continental Blockade. Thus, the brothers Muizeli were forced to declare bankruptcy after they faced the combined problems of declining trade due to the Continental Blockade, the requisition of timber for Riga's fortifications and the burning of the timber to prevent it from falling into the hands of the French in 1812.<sup>30</sup> Corn measurers also asked in 1811 to be given partial responsibilities of other crafts as they could not make a living because of the decline in the corn trade.<sup>31</sup>

One of the indicators demonstrating the decline in the prosperity and status of trade crafts at the time of the Continental Blockade is the drop in the number of construction plans submitted for approval. Before the Continental Blockade those involved in trade crafts often renovated or enlarged their homes as well as built new ones. During the Continental Blockade, however, only a few construction plans were submitted to the town council.<sup>32</sup>

Riga's officials sought to help depressed trade workers. For example, in spring 1809 timber transporters requested an increase in their service rates, and officials satisfied the request based on worries that the transporters struggling with the economy might quit their occupation prior to the time when barges arrived in Riga.<sup>33</sup> During the spring of 1809 the city authorities asked the governor to relieve the trade unions of the duty of artillery maintenance because they had difficulties earning their living and could not leave their workplace.<sup>34</sup> Prior to the Blockade, flax and hemp scutchers employed up to 300 workers in summer. During the Continental Blockade the demand for day hands diminished dramatically, and consequently their total wages decreased and they were periodically underemployed, especially during the summer of 1808.<sup>35</sup> During the Continental Blockade, however, the city authorities paid great attention to state purchases from merchants and commercial transactions between merchants themselves to ensure they followed the traditional procedures in processing goods in Riga that employed the underemployed flax and hemp scutchers. Thus, both trade workers and the City Treasury continued to receive their share of the profit following such commercial transactions.<sup>36</sup>

The decrease in merchants' income and disturbances in the market caused a chain reaction in city finances. Thus, in the middle of 1808 there was a considerable decrease in income for the Riga City Treasury and a subsequent lack of gold or bullion.<sup>37</sup> Starting from April 1808 the Riga Town Council recorded complaints regarding its inability to perform its basic functions, let alone cover emergency expenses, due to the sharp decrease of income.<sup>38</sup> Shortfalls of coinage in the city were also apparent in other years of the Continental Blockade, therefore merchants created a special commission to address this dilemma.<sup>39</sup> The commission sought to develop a plan that would use mortgage bonds or banknotes to replace gold and bullion in

commercial exchanges and relations. The problem of reliability, however, dominated these discussions without a clear resolution. As in commerce, the year 1808 was the hardest on the city. In 1809 income returned to the same level it was before the Continental Blockade only to fall again in the following years and see its lowest point during the War of 1812.<sup>40</sup>

In 1811 declining city income due to the Continental Blockade definitely contributed to and influenced the decision of the Riga municipality to hand over the city fortifications and artillery to the supervision of the Russian state. The War Ministry of Russia had been preparing for the war with Napoleon since spring 1810 and military plans required securing the fortress defence system. In accordance with the articles of the Accord of 1710 regulating the bilateral relations between Riga and Russia, the city remained responsible for the maintenance of the Riga fortress.<sup>41</sup> During the Blockade, however, the city increasingly considered maintaining the fortress a burden and turned to the Emperor several times requesting that the state relieve Riga of this fiscal liability. When preparing for the war with France, the War Ministry deemed this request appropriate since it facilitated the organizing and execution of the maintenance works. On 7 May 1811 Alexander I approved the Senate's decision to take over the Riga fortress and its artillery.<sup>42</sup>

Illegal trade and smuggling represented another means to survive the decline in commerce during the Blockade, even if it generated conflict with the Russian state. Yet currently there is very little information regarding the ways merchants tried to bypass the Continental Blockade. It is known that Riga broke the rules of the Continental Blockade more often than other ports of Russia because almost half of the ships and goods confiscated during the Continental Blockade were confiscated in Riga. The new capital tax also encouraged merchants to pursue illegal business.<sup>43</sup> Knowing that merchants were cheating in various ways, the government passed new decrees in 1808. In April it forbade entrance in the Russian ports for those ships from friendly states that had previously been to English ports even if they only carried ballast. In addition, sailors that left Russian ports had to confirm that they were not going to England.<sup>44</sup> Only the *ukase* of May 1809 stipulated that every ship entering the port should be able to present documents confirming the neutrality of the shipowner and crew and the neutrality of the cargo owner.

The negative influence of the 1810 regulations against neutral trade on Riga's export trade can also be noted. With the help of these regulations, Russia tried to solve the imbalance of foreign trade. In fact, it deviated from the Continental Blockade by trying to decrease import and increase export.<sup>45</sup> Although several bans on the export of goods were abolished, for fiscal reasons the export duty was increased for flax, hemp, linseed, potash and other goods.<sup>46</sup> These policies impacted a great part of Riga's export. As a result, the amounts of flax, hemp and linseed oil exported in 1811 fell considerably in comparison with the few previous years. There was an

insignificant increase only in the amounts of exported linseed for sowing and corn. Riga faced double losses during the Continental System, a decline in exports and, due to falling income, in public revenue.

### End of the Continental Blockade

In June 1812, shortly before the beginning of the war between Russia and Napoleon, the commander of the English squadron in the Baltic Sea, Rear Admiral Thomas Byam Martin, contacted the Riga War Governor Lieutenant General Magnus von Essen offering his help in fighting the common enemy.<sup>47</sup> A few days into the war several English ships stopped at Riga to help arm gunboats for the defence of Daugava River in the environs of Riga.<sup>48</sup> On 5 July Thomas Martin arrived in Riga to meet Essen. As there were also English merchants in Riga, their talks concerned not only military matters but also addressed the reinstatement of trade relations. Thomas Martin was ready to provide convoy for ships going to England. He prepared a special certificate that indicated the holders had rights to take goods from Riga directly to England.<sup>49</sup> Martin claimed that until 12 July no fewer than 100 ships had left Riga with corn, hemp and timber. It is significant that this happened before 18 July, when the peace treaty with England was concluded and reinstated trade relations, although it was not ratified until 24 September.<sup>50</sup> Since Russia and Britain remained officially at war, this situation provoked resistance from the Russian customs and port officers who did not want to let the ships leave Riga.<sup>51</sup> Essen solved this dilemma and ordered the officers not to delay the merchant ships. Only on 16 August 1812 was the *ukase* 'on restoring peace with England and opening trade relations with it in line with the existing legislation' issued, which opened Russian ports for English ships. Hence, until that point, ships from Riga went in the direction of London under the flags of other countries. According to the register of outgoing ships, some ships went to England only in the end of July, yet their numbers were low.<sup>52</sup> Meanwhile, in July there were a considerable number of ships heading to Gothenburg, and it is very likely that they continued farther to England. In September the Liquidation Commissions were eliminated and the sequester removed from English property, so in October those once-sequestered ships left Riga for England.<sup>53</sup> It should be noted that the English did not get back all the sequestered timber. Part of it had been used for securing Riga's defence, as mentioned above. Part of it (about 100 spars and about 2000 logs and other wood) had been kept in unsuitable conditions, and therefore decayed.<sup>54</sup>

There are only a few cases in 1812 when English merchants had been registered as exporters of goods. Still, this does not necessarily mean they were not involved in export deals because foreigners often cooperated with local large-scale merchants in Riga. Hence, it is difficult to determine the



real involvement of the English in export during the war. In 1813, however, the Mitchell, Cumming, Renny and Hill companies resumed active flax and hemp export at the very beginning of the sailing season.

## **Conclusion**

Russia was part of the Continental Blockade for four full years. It introduced the ban on trade with England at the end of 1807. In 1812 it actually dropped out of the Continental Blockade, reinstated trade relations with England and concluded or prolonged agreements with Spain, Sweden and certain German states. Aside from 1808 the value of Riga's export did not considerably fall during the Continental Blockade. It suffered much less than the total amount of Russia's exports. The city's merchants that specialized in export trade faced significant difficulties only in 1808 when the Continental Blockade expanded to include not only England, but also Sweden, and English warships blocked access to the Baltic ports.

Although Riga's treasury remained short of money, as very few ships came to the port and very few goods were exported, only a few merchants faced bankruptcy. Auxiliary workers as well as seasonal workers experienced temporary employment problems. They might have had difficulties finding work in 1808, but it was no longer a problem in 1809 when the movement of goods recommenced, or in 1811 when hands were required by the military department. The well-being of Riga's citizens was less affected by the Continental Blockade than by the fire of 23 July in 1812 when 782 buildings burnt down and 6882 people were left homeless and without any belongings. The fire broke out after the military leaders ordered the burning of buildings around the fortress to make an open field for artillery fire. Sloppy demolition work by the soldiers, gusty winds and the work of arsonists and plunderers led to the spread of an uncontrollable fire. At that time Riga expected an attack from Napoleon's army. Though the siege never took place, the fire that emerged from the preparation for the attack changed the lives of many people and left a permanent imprint in the history of Riga. The above events therefore remain inseparable from the Continental Blockade because Alexander's rejection of Napoleon's System was one of the key reasons for the War of 1812.

It is obvious that some of the factors in evolving commercial patterns and declining trade cannot be attributed solely to the Continental Blockade. Preparation for the war also hindered the normal exchange of goods. For example, in 1811 the construction of widespread fortification works in Riga required the demolition of several buildings, storehouses included. For security reasons, engineers forbade the merchants to keep their goods by the Daugava River. Many storehouses and trading places were relocated further from the fortifications into the suburbs, which was inconvenient and disadvantageous for

the merchants. All these factors and the related lack of order and uncertainty associated with war hindered the natural movement of goods.

The Continental Blockade itself caused more harm to the traders and processors of timber and corn because the export amounts of these goods fell sharply. Export amounts of the technical crops decreased as well, but the decline was not so considerable. What changed during the Continental Blockade was not so much the amount of the exported goods as the recipients specified in the commercial documents. For the goods in demand, a reorientation of market directions took place which permitted Riga to tolerate the Continental Blockade more easily. More profound studies on the influence of the Continental Blockade on the region would require close cooperation between historians from Latvia, Russia, Belarus, Lithuania and Poland because these sometimes very distant regions were the source of Riga's key export goods in demand by British and continental consumers alike.

## Notes

1. Johann Christoph Petri, *Neuestes Gemälde von Lief- und Ehistland, unter Katharina II und Alexander I in historischer, statistischer, politischer und merkantilischer Ansicht*, 2 vols (Leipzig, 1809), vol. 1, 194.
2. Михаил Злотников, *Континентальная блокада и Россия* (Москва, 1966), 12.
3. Валда Петерсоне, 'Рижский экспорт в период наместничества (1783–1796 гг.)', *Latvijas PSR Zinātņu Akadēmijas Vēstis* 5 (1987): 115.
4. Злотников, *Континентальная блокада*, 24.
5. *Ibid.*, 29.
6. Teodors Zeids, ed., *Feodālā Rīga* (Rīga, 1978), 272.
7. Отто Гун, *Топографическое описание города Ризы* (Санктпетербург, 1803), 105–6.
8. Ilga Grasmane, *Kapitālistiskās tirdzniecības attīstība Rīgā 18. gs. un 19. gs. pirmajā pusē* (Rīga, 1982), 55.
9. The operations carried out between 26 October and 5 November 1807 were considered valid. As far as it has been possible to find out, several English companies mortgaged their property to the merchants of Riga for considerable amounts of money during these days.
10. Злотников, *Континентальная блокада*, 138.
11. Latvian State Historical Archives (hereafter LSHA), Riga, Fund 673 External Archives of Riga Municipality, Entry 1, File 241, 2–4; LSHA, Riga, Fund 749 Chief Office of Riga Municipality, Entry 6, File 1084, 327–8.
12. LSHA, Riga, Fund 673, Entry 1, File 241, 13.
13. LSHA, Riga, Fund 1381 Riga Trade Court, Entry 1, File 214, 427.
14. The Manifest of 1807 declared that 'a guest' is a foreign merchant who becomes burgher for a limited time period and in addition to the customs duty pays 1.25 per cent of the capital above 50,000 bank assignation roubles. LSHA, Riga, Fund 1381, Entry 1, File 214, 424.
15. LSHA, Riga, Fund 749, Entry 6, File 565, 913.
16. LSHA, Riga, Fund 673, Entry 1, File 241, 146–8.
17. *Ibid.*, 413–15.

18. LSHA, Riga, Fund 749, Entry 6, File 1085, 148, 151.
19. Василий Дорошенко, 'Торговля Риги в период континентальной блокады', *Известия Академии Наук Латвийской ССР* 7 (1979): 23–32; Wilhelm Klumberg, *Die Kontinentalsperre in ihrer Auswirkung auf Riga* (Riga, 1926).
20. Ilga Grasmāne, *Daugava un Rīgas eksports XVIII gs. beigās un XIX gs. pirmajā pusē* (Riga, 1973), 135.
21. LSHA, Riga, Fund 3, *Office of the Governor of Vidzeme*, Entry 5, File 1280, leaf 1.
22. Petri, *Neuestes Gemälde*, vol. 1, 120.
23. Teodors Zeids, 'Rīga 18. un 19. gs. mijā', in Johans Kristofs Brotze, *Zīmējumi un apraksti*, ed. Teodors Zeids, 4 vols (Riga, 1992–2007), vol. 1, 37.
24. LSHA, Riga, Fund 1858 Riga city weigher office, Entry 1, File 207 and 208 (both numbers refer to ships carrying goods sold by weight).
25. Василий Дорошенко, 'Торговля Риги в период континентальной блокады', *Известия Академии Наук Латвийской ССР* 7 (1979): 27.
26. LSHA, Riga, Fund 4038 Society of Riga history and antiquity researchers, Entry 2, File 1054, leaf 50.
27. [Ulrich Schlippenbach], *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Krieges zwischen Rußland und Frankreich in den Jahren 1812 und 1813* (Mitau, 1813), 19.
28. *Ibid.*, 5.
29. LSHA, Riga, Fund 4 Board of the Vidzeme Government, Entry 14, File 372, leaves 2–15.
30. Johans Kristofs Broce, *Zīmējumi un apraksti*, vol. 2 (Riga, 1996), 286. Zeids, ed., *Feodālā Rīga*, 392.
31. LSHA, Riga, Fund 749, Entry 6, File 230, leaves 450–1.
32. LSHA, Riga, Fund 1379 Landfogtei Court, Entry 1, Files 863–9.
33. LSHA, Riga, Fund 749, Entry 6, File 568, 817–19.
34. At that time there was an opinion that the English might constitute a threat to Riga and therefore the fortress was kept ready for action.
35. LSHA, Riga, Fund 749, Entry 6, File 567, 26.
36. *Ibid.*, 86.
37. LSHA, Riga, Fund 749, Entry 6, File 1084, 672–3, 680.
38. LSHA, Riga, Fund 749, Entry 6, File 566, leaves 687, 746, 800, 817.
39. *Rigasche Stadtblätter* 47, 48, 49, 51 (1810).
40. LSHA, Riga, Fund 1390 Board of the Riga City Treasury, Entry 4, File 411, leaves 1–9.
41. *Полное Собрание Законов Российской Империи с 1649 года*, 45 vols (Санктпетербург, 1830), vol 4, no. 2278.
42. LSHA, Riga, Fund 4, Entry 14, File 1055, leaf 2.
43. LSHA, Riga, Fund 749, Entry 6, File 1084, 698.
44. LSHA, Riga, Fund 749, Entry 6, File 622, 170.
45. Галина Носова, 'О некоторых отличительных чертах торговли России со странами Европы в 1812 году', in *1812 год: Люди и события великой эпохи. Материалы международной научной конференции Москва 23 апреля 2009 года* (Москва, 2009), 106.
46. Grasmāne, *Daugava un Rīgas eksports*, 74.
47. Richard Vesely Hamilton, ed., *Letters and Papers of Admiral of the Fleet Sir Thos. Byam Martin*, 3 vols (London, 1898–1903), vol. 2, in *Publications of the Navy Records Society* 12 (1898): 189.
48. A.N. Ryan, ed., *The Saumarez Papers: Selections from the Baltic Correspondence of Vice-Admiral Sir James Saumarez 1808–1812*, in *Publications of the Navy Records Society* 110 (London, 1968): 236–7.

49. Ryan, *The Saumarez Papers*, 240–1.
50. A manifest issued by Alexander I on 12 September 1812 (Old Style) regarding trade relations between Russia and England which stated that due to the ratification of peace the subjects of Russia have rights to free trade with the English.
51. Hamilton, *Letters and Papers*, 214–19.
52. LSHA, Riga, Fund 1858, Entry 1, File 207, leaves 145–71.
53. LSHA, Riga, Fund 1, Entry 12, File 410, leaf 9.
54. LSHA, Riga, Fund 4, Entry 14, File 747, leaves 67–8.