

L. H. NICOLAY (1737-1820)
AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

EDMUND HEIER

L. H. NICOLAY (1737-1820)
AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

Directors: P. Dibon (Nimeguen) and R. Popkin (University of California, San Diego)
Editorial Board: J. Collins (St. Louis Univ.); A. Crombie (Oxford); I. Dambaska (Cracow);
H. de la Fontaine-Verwey (Amsterdam); H. Gadamer (Heidelberg); H. Gouhier (Paris);
T. Gregory (Rome); T. E. Jessop (Hull); A. Koyré (Paris); P. O. Kristeller (Columbia
Univ.); S. Lindroth (Upsal); P. Mesnard (Tours); J. Orcibal (Paris); I. S. Revah (Paris);
G. Sebba (Emory Univ., Atlanta); R. Shackleton (Oxford); J. Tans (Groningen);
G. Tonelli (Pise)

Secretaries: P. Golliet (Nimeguen) and Elisabeth Labrousse (Paris)

EDMUND HEIER

University of Waterloo

L. H. NICOLAY (1737-1820)
AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

DIDEROT, ROUSSEAU, VOLTAIRE, GLUCK,
METASTASIO, GALIANI, D'ESCHERNY,
GESSNER, BODMER, LAVATER, WIELAND,
FREDERICK II, FALCONET, W. ROBERTSON,
PAUL I, CAGLIOSTRO, GELLERT, WINCKELMANN,
POINSINET, LLOYD, SANCHEZ, MASSON, AND OTHERS



MARTINUS NIJHOFF / THE HAGUE / 1965

Copyright 1965 by Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, Netherlands

Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 1965

*All rights reserved, including the right to translate or to
reproduce this book or parts thereof in any form*

ISBN-13: 978-94-010-3566-8

e-ISBN-13: 978-94-010-3564-4

DOI: 10.1007/978-94-010-3564-4

PREFACE

Ludwig Heinrich von Nicolay (1737–1820) is virtually unknown in our time. Yet at the close of the eighteenth century he enjoyed a considerable reputation as a German poet of the French neo-classical orientation. He was esteemed as tutor to the Russian Emperor Paul I, as Russian State Counciller, and as President of the Russian Imperial Academy of Sciences. Moreover he was a friend of the most prominent eighteenth century minds that left their imprints on modern thought. As such a man, Nicolay may be studied from several points of view, as a writer, as an educator and as an intellectual.

My first preoccupation with Nicolay was of a literary nature – which resulted in a doctoral dissertation presented to the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor (1960), under the title “Ludwig Heinrich von Nicolay (1737–1820) as an exponent of neo-classicism.” The existence of the Nicolay archives, now in the possession of the Countess von der Pahlen in Helsinki, was not known to me at the time. Having later gained access to the same, I discovered a vast amount of unpublished documents and a treasury of correspondence with the leading intellectuals of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries. Much of this material was to be published in conjunction with the late Count N. von der Pahlen, who unexpectedly and unfortunately died in 1963.

It is with the kind permission of Count von der Pahlen, however, who placed the entire Nicolay archives at my disposal, that I am able to substantiate the present study of Nicolay and his contemporaries by unpublished letters and particularly by Nicolay’s own recollection of men like Diderot, Rousseau, Voltaire and others. In his account of these men Nicolay is not so much concerned with the great ideas which these minds had set forth in their writings as with significant events that frequently shaped their lives and thoughts. Herein alone

lies the significance of Nicolay. The publication then of this manuscript is undertaken in the spirit of the "International Archives of the History of Ideas" which seeks to reveal the "intellectual conditions of intellectual life" of the centuries which helped to mold modern thought.

I should like to express here my deep gratitude to the late Count N. von der Pahlen for permitting me to use much of the unpublished material from the Nicolay archives, to the German Academic Exchange Service and the American Council of Learned Societies for their grants which made the research possible for this study. I wish also to acknowledge my debt to various libraries which gave me generous help in collecting valuable material on Nicolay; but in particular to the library of the University of Helsinki and its Director of the Manuscript Department, W. Appelqvist, to the Westdeutsche Bibliothek in Marburg, the Public Library (Saltykov-Shchedrin) in Leningrad, and the Library of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Leningrad. I am most grateful to Mrs. V. Juhasz and the University of Waterloo for their clerical help in the preparation of this manuscript. A special note of thanks goes to Professors Paul Dibon and Richard Popkin for publishing this manuscript in the "International Archives of the History of Ideas."

EDMUND HEIER
University of Waterloo
Waterloo, Ontario

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface (v)

Introduction: Nicolay, a neglected figure (1)

Previous studies on Nicolay;
Aim of the present study

Part One

Nicolay the man and writer

I: Nicolay and Western Europe, 1737–1768 (9)

Ancestors, Education, the budding poet, Gellert, University of Strasbourg, Laferrière, Pfeffel, D'Artot, Paris, Diderot, M. Grimm, d'Alembert, Voltaire, D. M. Golitsyn, Vienna, Gluck, Metastasio, J. Fries, M. Denis, Razumovskii, Winckelmann

II: In the service of the Russian State, 1769–1803 (30)

Catherine the Great and Western Europe, The Grand Duke Paul, W. Robertson's History of the Reign of the Emperor Charles V, The Grand Duchess Maria Feodorovna, Ramler, F. Nicolai, poetic activities, Frederick the Great, M. Klingler, J. M. R. Lenz, Emperor Joseph II, J. B. v. Alxinger, Lavater, J. H. Voss, Schiller, Paul I, Russian Imperial Academy of Sciences, S. R. Vorontsov, Alexander I, Ch. F. Ph. Masson, Kotzebue

III: Retirement, 1803–1820 (56)

Monrepos, J. G. Seume, Molière, Racine, Goldoni, literary merits, Tiedge, E. v. d. Recke, de Broglie, descendants, the last of the Nicolays

Part Two

Nicolay's "*Erinnerungen*"

IV: Nicolay's approach to his subject matter (69)

Nicolay's own "*Einleitung*" to his memoirs (70) – Nicolay's comments on "*Charakterschilderung*" (72)

V: Nicolay's account of the Encyclopedists and their associates in
Paris (76)

Diderot (76) – Poinset (84) – Rousseau (90) – Voltaire (95) – Abbé Galiani (102) –
d'Eschery (104) – Sanchez (110)

VI: Nicolay's account of his associates in Vienna, Berlin and Zürich
(113)

Metastasio (113) – Gluck (115) – Fries (123) – Ramler (132) – Gessner (133) – Lavater
(136) – Bodmer (139)

VII: Nicolay's account of his associates in St. Petersburg (142)

Falconet (142) – Bilstein (151) – Masson (156) – Cagliostro (161) – Kruse (163) –
Lloyd (170) – Monestrol (175)

Appendix (186)

Bibliography (193)

Index (204)