
NOTES

British Economic Interests in the Lower Danube and the Balkan Shore of the Black Sea between 1803 and 1829

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During the period when the famous British Levant Company was flourishing, from the end of the 16th century to the beginning of the 18th century, the only European part of the Ottoman Empire which remained out of the reach of the Company's commercial fleet was the Black Sea. The leading circles in Constantinople constantly opposed any request or offer from foreign merchants to enter the Black Sea to enable them to exploit directly the riches of its shores or those of the lower Danube. This area included the Romanian Principalities, then dominated by the Porte, which exercised an economic monopoly over them, a monopoly which was not, however, always rigorously applied.¹

This situation continued until the peace of Kuchuk Kainarji (1774), which allowed Russia — then in full expansion, and eager to reach the shores of the Bosphorus as quickly as possible, after having defeated Turkey in the war begun in 1768 — to demand Turkey's consent for the free traffic of her trading ships in the Black Sea. The rapid growth of the Russian ports of Odessa, Taganrog, Nicolaiev, Mariupol, etc. followed. The great victory won by the government of St. Petersburg was soon crowned, first by the annexion of the Crimea, in 1783, and then by the establishment of Russian Consulates in Bucharest and in Yassy, two years later. This helped the Russians to exercise their right to intervene in the Romanian Principalities, which gave rise to the kind of double "protectorate", both Russian and

¹ More details in our study *England's Trade Policy in the Levant... 1660-1714*, Bucharest, 1972, pages 47-57.

Turkish, over the Romanian Countries, which was to last to the end of the Crimean war (1856).

Great Britain, who had, during the 18th century, considered Russia — with rare exceptions — as an almost traditional ally in the struggle with France, did not begin to show any alarm over the schemes aimed at the break up of the Ottoman Empire in Europe, advocated by Czarine Catherine II, until the war of 1787, in which Russia was allied to Habsburg Austria. A grave crisis then occurred in Anglo-Russian relations, owing to William Pitt's protest and his refusal to recognize the annexion of Oczakov and of the Crimean Peninsula by the Russians. Pitt even issued an ultimatum, in his speech in the House of Commons in March 1791, threatening the Court of St. Petersburg with armed intervention. Though Pitt was then disavowed, both by the Parliamentary opposition as well as by English public opinion, which still considered Russia a sincere ally and an excellent trading partner, the Oczakov crisis led to the first divergences between the policies of the two countries, which were diametrically opposed as far as a possible solution to the Eastern Question was concerned. And these differences were to be continually exacerbated after 1815.²

Great Britain began to adopt a firmer policy in the South-Eastern area of the continent, and considered her active presence essential — on political as well as on commercial grounds — in the Black Sea and on the Danube, that important channel of communication reaching up to the heart of Central Europe.

The opportunity to fulfil this aim was presented by Bonaparte's landing in Egypt (1798), which forced Turkey to enter into an alliance not only with England, but, paradoxically, also with her traditional rival, Russia, as both powers were then concerned to check French expansion as well as to prevent the spread of the revolutionary spirit throughout the continent.

The political objective of Great Britain's presence in the Black Sea was to counterbalance Russian influence in that region. As far as trade was concerned, however, the Levant Company was then in obvious decline, and its area of activity had shrunk to Constantinople and the other ports of the Eastern Mediterranean. Nevertheless, the merchants affiliated to this Company seem to have shown some, albeit moderate, interest in including the Pontic basin in their trading area. They were attracted by the opportunity of exploring the natural resources of Bulgaria and the Romanian Countries on the lower Danube, where they expected to procure, in more advantageous conditions, grains, spices and timber, in exchange for various kinds of cloth, colonial goods and of manufactured products. They did not, it is true, aim at trading with the Russian ports of the Southern Ukraine and the Crimea, for the Baltic route provided an easier way of exchanging goods with Russia.

² See chiefly TREVOR J. HOPE, *Britain and the Black Sea Trade in the Late Eighteenth Century*, in « *Revue roumaine d'études internationales* », VIII (1974), n. 2 (24), pp. 163-167.

Spencer Smith, the British "chargé d'affaires" at Constantinople, who was also the representative of the Levant Company in the Ottoman Empire, submitted a memorandum to the senior Ottoman officials on 1 September, 1798, in which, acting on instructions from both the British Government, and from the managers of the Levant Company in London, he requested them to grant British commercial ships the right to sail the Black Sea, as well, of course, as to use the ports of the Danube.³ Though the Porte did not refuse this request outright, it granted it only after considerable delays and after signing a peace with Napoleonic France, whose increasing prestige and power obliged the Porte — through the treaty signed on 25 June, 1802, after Talleyrand's negotiations — to allow the entry of trading French ships in the Pontic basin.⁴

It was, then, after a delay of some years that Great Britain finally secured (on 29 July, 1802), through the Reis Effendi Raif Mahmoud Pasha, a privilege, confirmed by the Hatti-sheriff of Sultan Selim III of the 15th of Zilhidge, 1217 (corresponding to A.D. 8 April 1803), according to which she was allowed to trade unhindered in the Black Sea, and on the lower Danube, following the conditions of ancient Capitulations signed by Great Britain with the Porte: a customs rate of 3% *ad valorem*, the arbitration of any litigation to be subject to joint commissions, etc.⁵ At the same time the attention of British ruling circles began to concentrate on the Danubian Principalities as well, which then represented a peculiar area within the conglomerate Ottoman state. The rivalry between Austria, Russia and Turkey was becoming increasingly acute in this area, and French interference was beginning to spread there obviously endangering British economic and political interests. Consequently in February 1880, Lord Elgin, the British envoy at Constantinople, who on the basis of the ancient Capitulations drawn up with the Porte by Great Britain was allowed to establish permanent diplomatic missions in any province of the Ottoman Empire his government saw fit, decided to accredit — for the time being only for personal reasons — one of his emissaries, Francis Summerers,⁶ to the Romanian Principalities. Three years later, on the 10th November, 1803, Summerers sent a report to the British Government, in which he requested official acknowledgement of his position in the Principalities. In his memoir he

³ *Ibidem*, p. 173.

⁴ GERMAINE LEBEL, *La France et les Principautés danubiennes (du XVIIe siècle à la chute de Napoleon Ier)*, Paris, 1956, pp. 319-320.

⁵ A. C. WOOD, *A History of the Levant Company*, Oxford University Press, 1935, p. 181; the translation in English of the Hatti-sheriff of the Sultan apud P.R.O., F.O., Turkey, folio 112-113.

⁶ Cf. our study, *The setting up of the English Consulate in the Romanian principalities (1803) and its activity until 1807*, in « *Revue roumaine d'études internationales* », V (1971), n. 1 (11), pp. 187-188.

also accurately stated the reasons behind Lord Elgin's request for the establishment of a British consulate in Bucharest. Firstly, Great Britain had been outstripped by Russia, Austria, and France, who all had consular representatives in the Romanian Countries and were already defending both their economic and political interests by promoting trade with their countries, as well as the affairs of the merchants under their protection and who informed their respective governments of any important events that might reach their notice. Secondly, the ease with which diplomatic correspondence between Vienna and Constantinople could be carried on, and thirdly, the promotion of British trade in the Principalities. For the last item, Lord Elgin also requested the support of the powerful East India Company which was interested in ensuring the swift and regular passage of its correspondence with the oriental countries through Vienna, at a time when trans-Mediterranean shipping was threatened by the positions held in the Western area by the French and their allies, the Spaniards. The British emissary in the Principalities also had to arbitrate in any conflicts between the native traders and the British operating in the market of Leipzig, so that frequently endless trials took place arbitrated by the Turkish *kadis* in Giurgevo, Braila or even Constantinople.⁷

Thus, for mainly political motives — the necessity of keeping watch on one of the outstanding areas of South-East Europe, the need to survey closely the dealings of the French emissaries in the Balkans and to counter-balance the increasing influence of Russia and Austria (though the latter's influence was in temporary decline), the British envoy in Constantinople, who never in fact received the express consent of the Foreign Office, decided to establish consular representation on the Romanian Principalities, based in Bucharest. It was also to attempt, if possible, to promote British trade on the Danube and in the Black Sea, as William Eton⁸ and later Thomas Thornton⁹ stated in their memoirs. Sultan Selim III's response to Lord Elgin's request was favourable, and on 23rd of Ramazan, 1217 (17 January 1803) he issued a *berat* (an Imperial diploma granting Francis Summerers the status of British Consul General in Wallachia and Moldavia; at the end of the same month it was made known to the Princes of the two countries, Constantine Ypsilanty of Wallachia and Alexander Murusi of Moldavia).¹⁰

Summerers' consular activity in the Romanian Principalities did not last long, ending in June 1807, but it was very eventful, at a time when

⁷ PAUL SIMIONESCU and RADU VALENTIN, *Documents inédits concernant la création du consulat britannique à Bucarest (1803)*, in « Revue roumaine d'histoire », VIII (1969), n. 2, pp. 251-257, doc. III.

⁸ *Concise account of the Commerce and Navigation of the Black Sea*, London, 1805.

⁹ *The present State of Turkey or a Description of the Political, Civil and Religious Constitution, Government, and Laws of the Ottoman Empire*, London, 1807.

¹⁰ P. SIMIONESCU and RAUL VALENTIN, *q.w.*, p. 244. The translation in English of these accounts *apud* P.R.O., F.O. Turkey, 78/71, folios 82-95 and folios 96-101 v°.

the followers of Pazvantoglou, the turbulent Pasha of Widdin who rebelled against the Porte, were stirring up trouble, and also because of the difficulties caused by Bonaparte's agents in the Balkans, who attempted to take advantage of the insurrection among the Serbs led by Karageorge in 1804. Finally, the outbreak of a new war between Russia and Turkey in 1806 did not improve the climate for the development of general, and especially British, trade in that area. This accounts for the fact that the numerous dispatches he sent to the various British envoys in Constantinople, or to the Secretary of State, contained political, diplomatic or military, and very little economic, intelligence; even his report to the East India Company on 30 September 1805 discussed problems which did not affect that area (« *Finances de la France sous le gouvernement de Bonaparte* »).¹¹

Despite these events the British Embassy in Constantinople tried to exercise to the full the privilege obtained for British ships to sail in the Black Sea. A report sent to Britain by the Minister Alexander Straton in 1803 on « Black Sea Navigation and Trade » discussed possible exports or imports through Russian ports, and the goods which might be sent from the Principalities via the Danube and from Bulgaria to Constantinople. The report stressed the potential role of the Moldavian port of Galatz for international trade and its particular importance to the English as a port through which to obtain timber.¹² The British Admiralty was even considering proposals to supply its War fleet in the Mediterranean, which was under the command of Admiral Nelson, with some 400,000 pounds of salt meat purchased from the Principalities (23 March 1805), and to recruit joiners and carpenters for the repair of the British ships, and Colonel Moore was sent to Bucharest on 17 September charged with this mission.¹³

Subsequently, in 1804, the Secretary of State instructed Charles Arbuthnot, the British Ambassador in Constantinople, to request the Turkish rulers to grant preferential tariffs for the goods conveyed by English ships in the Black Sea, which Russia and France had already obtained. But this problem was settled only on 18 July, 1805, when Arbuthnot informed the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Lord Mulgrave, of the contents

¹¹ *Ibidem*, 78/46, folios 100-110. For other difficulties — chiefly financial — which Francis Summerers encountered in carrying out his duties in the Principalities, and which were due to the Foreign Office's refusal to recognize its consular capacity, and for the various memoirs on this matter sent to different Secretaries of State for Foreign Affairs, even after his departure from the Romanian Countries (up to 1810) see also W.G. EAST, *The Union of Moldavia and Wallachia, 1859. An Episode in Diplomatic History*, Cambridge, 1929, *Appendix*, I, pp. 170-181.

¹² P.R.O., F.O., *Turkey*, 78/39, folios 83 85 v^o

¹³ E. DE HURMUZAKI, *Documente primitive la istoria românilor* (Documents concerning Romanian history), vol. XVI, Bucharest, 1912, pp. 682-683 and 690, doc. MDLXXVI and MDLXXXVIII, apud G. LEBEL, *op. cit.*, pp. 105-106.

of a note from the high official of the Porte agreeing to the British demands.¹⁴ But soon, in December 1806, the entry of British ships into the Black Sea was prevented by the outbreak of war between Russia — then Great Britain's ally against Napoleon — and the Ottoman Empire, following the occupation of the Danubian Principalities by Russian troops.

Encouraged by French military successes on the Continent, the Porte rejected Ambassador Arbuthnot's offer of mediation, which induced the British Government to break off diplomatic relations with the Porte in February 1807, and even to open hostilities when an attempt was made by the fleet, under the command of Admiral Duckworth, to enter the Straits by force. This attempt failed, but a complete reversal of the situation occurred when Russia was compelled by Napoleon's victories to sign a peace treaty with France, after the French Emperor's meeting with Czar Alexander at Tilsit on 7 July, 1807.

Russia was then compelled to adhere to the Continental System and to break off relations with Great Britain, who then found herself in an unpleasant state of diplomatic isolation. With French intervention the Ottoman Empire simultaneously concluded a temporary truce with Russia at Slobozia, on 24 August 1807, according to which the Russians, whom Napoleon favoured, could continue to occupy the Danubian Principalities with the clear purpose of eventually annexing them.

The British soon reacted to this complex situation in South-East Europe. First, Britain hastened to normalize her relations with Turkey, which had deteriorated somewhat after the events of 1807; after long and tedious negotiations the two countries signed the peace treaty of the Dardanelles on 5 January 1809. Great Britain and the Ottoman Empire thus decided to re-establish their former friendly relations that were laid down in the Capitulations. The political activity brought about by Napoleon's re-arrangement of the European map finally provoked the break - up of alliances, so that for example the former allies Great Britain and Russia found themselves in opposing camps, the former supporting Turkey while the latter was supported, to a certain extent, by France. The negotiations aimed at the conclusion of peace between Russia and Turkey failed because of the former's exaggerated territorial ambitions and the Porte's refusal to yield the Principalities to the Czar.¹⁵

British diplomacy completely shared the Turks' aims, and in his report from Constantinople to George Canning, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, of 19 March 1809 the British Ambassador Sir Robert Adair underlined the need to send a note to the Porte containing « a strong

¹⁴ P.R.O., F.O., *Turkey*, 78/45, folios 47-58 v°, 136-151 v°, 199-203 v°.

¹⁵ For all these details, see HUGH SETON-WATSON, *The Russian Empire 1801-1917*, Oxford, 1967, pp. 94-96, 115-117.

exhortation not to permit Russia to establish herself on the Danube».¹⁶ In order to offer the Turks the possibility of reply and also strengthen their position Adair, in the same report, also called for a British naval expedition in the Black Sea to attack the Crimea and Sebastopol,¹⁷ which would have forestalled by some fifty years the intervention of 1854-1856. It is well known, nevertheless, that the imminent rupture of relations between Napoleon and Czar Alexander persuaded Great Britain, during the spring of 1812, to intervene by urging the Turks to accept a compromise peace with Russia, whose claims were now limited to the annexation of Bessarabia alone, through which she would however obtain an outlet to the Danube. Through the signature of the treaty of Bucharest on 28 May, 1812, the Russians not only obtained half of Moldavia, to the river Pruth, but they also occupied one of the important channels of the Danube, the Kilia, where it flows into the Black Sea, which was to increase their domination of the Pontic basin enormously.¹⁸

Once peace was re-established in this corner of Europe, the Black Sea was re-opened to merchant ships of all European countries. On 9 October 1811, Mehmed Arif, the Reis Effendi, sent a note to Stratford Canning, the British envoy in Constantinople, which permitted English ships to enter the Black Sea and trade there freely.¹⁹ One year before, on 21 October 1810, the Turks had promised to lift the prohibition on the export of corn to foreign countries from territories under Ottoman rule.²⁰ Encouraged by such measures, the Levant Company again became interested in the Danubian Principalities, where it decided to re-establish its consular representation.

After the departure of Summerers — the *de facto* British consul in Bucharest — he was replaced by an agent whom he had himself appointed, the Levantine Drogman Ioan Marco,²¹ whose status nevertheless was never officially acknowledged by the British Government. With the agreement of Sir Robert Liston, the British Ambassador in Constantinople, the Levant Company, appointed William Wilkinson, the son of a former Danish envoy

¹⁶ P.R.O., F.O., *Turkey*, 78/63, folio 144.

¹⁷ Adair insisted to Canning in the following manner: «I... strongly recommended to his Lordship, to consent to the demand of naval cooperation in the Black Sea if the Turks should require it, and if his means would permit it... Capt[ain] Stewart, who has seen the Castles both the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, is decidedly of opinion to venture a Squadron in the Black Sea. I really think the menace of attacking Sevastopolis would materially assist the conclusion of the Russian peace on fair terms...», cf. *ibidem*, folio 148.

¹⁸ PAUL GOGENAU, *Dunărea în relațiile internaționale* (The Danube in international relations), Bucharest, 1970, pp. 29-30.

¹⁹ P.R.O., F.O., *Turkey*, 78/74, folios 158-159.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, 78/70, folios 295-296 v^o.

²¹ PAUL CERNOVODEANU, *The setting up of the England Consulate in the Romanian Principalities...*, p. 200.

at Smyrna,²² as its representative in the Principalities. He held consular rank, and received a salary of £ 360.²³ The new occupant of this position announced his appointment to Lord Castlereagh, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, on 21 October 1813, and offered to work for the Foreign Office.²⁴ The British authorities, however, decided not to recognize the existence of a consulate in Bucharest, adopting a position which was in glaring contradiction with their real political and economic interests. As in Summerer's case, the Porte allowed Wilkinson to act as general consul for Great Britain in the Romanian Principalities, in a *berat* issued in the name of Sultan Mahmud II on 24th of Djumadi I, 1229 (14 May 1814). It specified that his duties were to represent the interests of British trade and to assure the passage of messengers and diplomatic correspondence through Romanian Countries.²⁵ Wilkinson took office on 2 July 1814, when he came to Bucharest and presented his letters to Prince Ioan Caradja in solemn audience.²⁶ On 25 November 1814, he also presented them to Prince Scarlat Callimaki in Yassy.²⁷ The French vice-consul Fonetty commented on his arrival in Yassy in a report to Talleyrand on 25 November 1814: « The English consul in the two Provinces, Mr Wilkinson, has come here to be recognized in his official position by the Prince . . . Reflecting on the reasons which might explain the presence of an English agent in this Province, it occurs to me that they might well be interested in obtaining a concession to export timber from the Porte for building ships for the British navy in the Mediterranean. Seasoned timber in particular would be a very valuable commodity . . . ».²⁸

During the brief period in which he acted as the Levant Company's representative in the Romanian Principalities, Wilkinson proved to be a very attentive observer of the social and economic as well as political affairs in the Romanian Countries. He even analysed with some competence the possibilities of developing their foreign trade. In the letter sent to Lord Castlereagh, on 10 October 1814, from Bucharest, the British consul revealed the intentions of the Levant Company, and reported on annual British exports to the Principalities: « The principal object that the Levant Company had in view in re-establishing this Consulate, was to increase the commercial intercourse of Great Britain with Turkey [Wallachia and

²² E. DE HURMUZAKI, *q.w.* (New Series), vol. II, *Rapoarte consulare austriace* (Austrian Consular Accounts) (1812-1823), Bucharest, 1967, p. 193, doc. 185.

²³ RADU R. FLORESCU, *The Struggle against Russia in the Roumanian Principalities: a Problem in Anglo-Turkish Diplomacy, 1821-1854*, München, 1962, p. 81.

²⁴ *Ibidem*.

²⁵ See W. WILKINSON, *An account of the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia*, London, 1820, appendix I, pp. 199-202.

²⁶ E. DE HURMUZAKI, *q.w.* (New Series), vol. II, p. 193, doc. 185.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 221, doc. 216.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, vol. XVI, p. 989, doc. MCMXXVIIJ.

Moldavia, our note], in facilitating and promoting the Corn trade of this Country and the introduction of British Products in return ». Underlining the difficulties facing the corn trade owing to the Turkish monopoly, Wilkinson added that: « The Corn trade would have become very considerable, had not the Turkish Government imposed restrictions of the severest nature regarding the exportation of that article from any place whatever on the Danube where ships have access, for any but Government account ». Concerning the introduction of British goods in the Romanian Principalities, he reported that: « The importation, however, of British productions, has been duly encouraged, and the annual consumption of them, in both these provinces, may now be valued at Forty thousand Pounds Sterling ». In the same account, Wilkinson added many more very interesting details concerning both the number of British merchants, or those under British protection, in the Principalities, and the traffic of British ships on the Danube: « It is not perhaps needless for me to inform Your Lordship that the number of Merchants settled here at Galatz and at Jassy, enjoying the British protection, may amount to one hundred, and that the number of English vessels coming at Galatz, when the Black Sea navigation is entirely free, often exceed ten in the Season ».²⁹

The number of vessels flying the British flag on the Danube or the Black Sea increased when the Ionian Islands (Corfu, Cephalonia, Cerigo, Zante, etc.) were put under Great Britain's protection on 1st September, 1815 by the Congress of Vienna. Then a number of Greek merchants, trading for British companies, settled in Galatz and in Braila³⁰ or even in some ports on the Black Sea.

In spite of these auspicious signs, and the increase of traffic in the area, the Levant Company was highly dissatisfied with the profits obtained in the Principalities, and, on 11 July 1816, it decided to close its station in Bucharest and recall Wilkinson,³¹ although he had been of real service to the Company, and despite the high regard in which he was held by the Romanian authorities as well as his fellow countrymen and the Ionian merchants under British' protection. On 22 July 1818, sixty Ionian merchants from Bucharest sent — through Wilkinson — a request to the British Government, protesting against the suppression of the British consulate in the Principalities, a measure which they considered as being « injurious to our commercial interests, to our personal safety and our national pride »; also Prince Ioan Caradja sent Lord Castlereagh a letter.

²⁹ P.R.O., F.O., *Turkey*, 78/82, folios 208-209 v^o.

³⁰ In a report sent to the High Porte, concerning the number of foreign subjects in Moldavia on 7 April 1825, it was stated that of the 90 subjects, mainly Ionians recorded by the English consulate, almost 76 here lived in the Principality « from remote time », were married to native women and also had « some outhouses », cf. Romanian Academy, Mss. CXXII/95.

³¹ A. C. Wood, *A History of the Levant Company*, pp. 196-197.

on the same date, declaring that « Mr Wilkinson has, during his residence in Wallachia behaved in a most honourable and distinguished manner, and not only has he won the friendship and respect of those who have known him but his departure will also be accompanied by the sincere regrets of both myself and the inhabitants of Wallachia ».³²

Wilkinson did indeed possess broad knowledge, a keen, inquiring mind and an ability to understand all matters fully, qualities which at that time were not usually to be found in a foreign observer. He also left, as a valuable product of his brief but fruitful stay in the Romanian countries,³³ a well-informed monograph entitled, *An account of the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia*, which was printed in London 1820. This work helped to spread a great deal of information about the Romanian Countries, not only in British political and trading circles, but also, through its translation into French, throughout the Continent. Concerning the main resources of these Countries, and the possibilities of exploiting them, Wilkinson reported: « The natural richness, and the various resources of Wallachia and Moldavia, are such, that if those countries could enjoy the important advantages of a regular government and a wise administration, under which industry and agriculture should receive their due encouragement, the trade of exports laid open, the commercial intercourse with foreign nations set upon a proper footing, and finally, the mines explored, they would in a short time become most populous and most flourishing provinces of Europe. The harbour of Galatz³⁴ would soon stand in rivalry with all the ports of the Black Sea, not excepting Odessa ».³⁵ Concerning the development of British trade in the Romanian Principalities, the former British consul added: « Of late years, some natives of the Ionian islands have begun to trade in the Principalities, and the English flag, borne by their vessels, is now frequently displayed on the Danube. Some overland expeditions of goods coming from Smyrna are now and then made by way of Enos and Adrianople; but they are attended with risk and difficulty; besides which, the amount of charges

³² RADU FLORESCU, *q.w.*, pp. 80-81, also *Appendix*, doc. I, p. 293.

³³ Wilkinson knew the Principalities, thoroughly and had travelled through them many times. Evidence of his explorations of both Wallachia and Oltenia, as far as Orshova may be also found in the report of the Austrian consul Flaischhacki to Metternich on 8 October 1816, cf. HURMUZAKI, *q.w.*, II, New Series, p. 363, doc. 372.

³⁴ Wilkinson stated in his report that some ships were overhauled there. The Governor of Galatz had other obligations which included, in addition to the supervision of the shipyard and the harbour, the works for maintaining navigability through the canal of Sulina, where since 1818 a light-house had been placed. An English engineer, who was brought over from Gibraltar, was also employed to build hydraulic arrangements, cf. SERGIU COLUMBEANU, *Aspecte ale istoriei navigatiei in România (din cele mai vechi timpuri pînă la tratatul de la Adrianopol - 1829)* [Aspects of the history of navigation in Romania (from earliest times to the Adrianople Treaty - 1829)], in « Studii. Revistă de istorie », 25 (1972), n. 4, p. 740.

³⁵ WILKINSON, *An account of the Principalities . . .*, pp. 84-85.

surpasses by eight per cent those incurred by way of Galatz ».³⁶ The most sought-after merchandise seems to have been « the English muslins . . . always profitable articles to speculators, and never remain long on hand ».³⁷

On the whole, however, the activities of British merchants on the lower Danube were modest, owing chiefly to the economic monopoly imposed by the Ottoman Porte on the foreign trade of both Romanian Principalities.

Wilkinson stated that Wallachia then produced some 10 million Constantinople kilos of corn,³⁸ some 66 per cent of which supplied the capital of the Ottoman Empire and the garrisons in the Ottoman strongholds located on the banks of the Danube and the remainder met the needs of the internal market. Only on a very minor, and illicit, scale was there any foreign trade in corn, and this involved the smuggling of corn into Austria.

According to rough figures obtained by the Russian consulate in Bucharest, it seems that during the years 1812-1819, the Ottoman Empire was still the chief beneficiary of Wallachia's foreign trade. In fact, Turkey absorbed 57.4% of total exports, the value of which amounted to 8,087,000 *lei* or *piastres*, while other countries, Austria, Russia and the Western powers, purchased only the remainder, or 42.6%, to the value of some seven millions. Imports were even more dependent on the Porte, which sent 62.1%, or 9.8 million *piastres*, while all the other countries sent only 37.9% of the merchandise imported by Wallachia in those years.³⁹

It was obvious that such a situation was not likely to encourage the Levant Company to maintain its representative in the Principalities, and it did in fact recall Wilkinson to Constantinople. However on 13 February, 1818, the British Ambassador at the Porte, Sir Robert Liston, asked the Austrian consul in Bucharest, Franz Flaischhackl von Hakenau, to manage the affairs of the British consulate in the Principalities, if Chancellor Metternich agreed, for he had to consider the interests of the Ionian mer-

³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 84.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 83.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 75.

³⁹ The Archives of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Moscow, F SPB, Glavnyj archiv. I-9, file 2, 1st part, folio 17-18. In Moldavia the situation was the same, according to the evidence given by JULIUS DE HAGEMASTER, *Report of the Commerce of the ports of New Russia, Moldavia, and Wallachia, made to the Russian Government in 1835* . . . (translated by T.F. Triebner), London, 1836, pp. 86-47: «Furnishing the same export produce as the ports of the Black Sea . . . Moldavia presents a most important market for foreign merchandise . . . The Turks, however, after almost paralyzing the spirit and the industry of the place, have hardly left to the inhabitants the consciousness of the value of their own position. Year by year, the Turkish functionaries fixed arbitrarily the price of wheat, tallow, butter, cattle, and wood; and whoever chose to sell his surplus stock, was obliged to give it up to the government at the price fixed. It was only by smuggling that shipments could be then made to other ports. The produce thus purchased by the government, and the imposts levied by it in kind, were sent to Constantinople ».

chants of Moldavia and Wallachia and had no alternative solution to the problem as the Foreign Office had refused its support.⁴⁰ This compromise solution was to last for eight years⁴¹ during which important changes took place on both the political and economic level in this area.

First, the Eastern Question suddenly became more acute, owing to the insurrections staged by the Greek *Hetairia* and by Tudor Vladimirescu in 1821. The tensions provoked by these events, and the consequences of the Turkish repressions, led to a bitter diplomatic confrontation between the Porte and Russia, while Great Britain and Austria, supported by France, acted as mediators. Lord Strangford, the British Ambassador in Constantinople, energetically opposed both Russia's ambitions to intervene in the Danubian Principalities, and also the arbitrary measures adopted by Turkey, and succeeded in preventing the break up of the precarious balance of power then existing in South-Eastern Europe, where an explosive situation threatened to develop into war.⁴²

The British and the Austrian trading fleets did not suffer from the restrictive measures adopted by the Turks in the administration of the Straits but neither was the climate propitious for the unhindered development of trade in the Black Sea. The same situation occurred on the Danube which was kept free for the exchange of merchandise (according to the treaty signed on 9 June 1815, in Vienna, regarding the great international rivers)⁴³ from its mouth up to its furthest navigable point. However it did not offer any security, as the troubles provoked in the Principalities by the insurrections of 1821 were followed by an oppressive Turkish military occupation in 1821 and 1822.

The complexity of the situation in this area of Europe after 1821, where movements were gaining strength in each Balkan state to obtain delivery from foreign oppression forced the British government to reconsider its position in South-Eastern Europe. Its first task was to reconcile the principles embraced in government circles in London with their economic and political aims. It therefore seemed inconceivable that the British Government and the Levant Company could share responsibilities in the Eastern Mediterranean. The Levant Company had traded for two centuries on the

⁴⁰ RADU FLORESCU, *q.w.*, p. 80. Fleischbackl functioned in this capacity until the spring of 1826 and received for his services a payment of £500 from the British Ambassador in Vienna, Lord Cowley, on 18th August, 1826. (Haus, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Wien, Staatskanzlei, *Moldau-Walachei, Berichte aus Bukarest, 1826, I-XII*, Karton 32).

⁴¹ In spite of Summerers insinuations, and the requests he made to Lord Castle-reagh up to 1822 to re-establish the British consulate in Bucharest, and offering his services again. Cf. RADU FLORESCU, *q.w.*, pp. 81-82 and 297-298, doc. n. IV.

⁴² RADU R. FLORESCU, *Lord Strangford and the Problem of the Danubian Principalities, 1821-1824*, in «The Slavonic and East European Review», XXXIX (1961), pp. 472-488; ANDREI OȚETEĂ, *Tudor Vladimirescu și revoluția din 1821*, Bucharest, 1971, pp. 308-311, 475-490.

⁴³ P. GOGEANU, *Dunărea în relațiile internaționale...*, p. 32.

basis of its charters of privileges, which recorded its closed monopolistic character. But the way in which it carried out its operations was now proving to be very out of date and even obsolete, in the light of the demands for the liberalisation of trade, which the new English society was now making. On the other hand, because of the rights it had already obtained, the Levant Company could exercise full discretion over the establishment or abolition of any consular representation in the Ottoman Empire, and it was expected to consider its own interests in doing so. This situation proved to be damaging to Great Britain, at a time when political considerations were becoming paramount in the British Cabinet's view of the Eastern Question. The abolition of the Levant Company began to be considered as a necessity. On 19 May 1825, its property was devolved entirely to the Crown, and all its consular representatives in the Levant came under the direct control of the Foreign Office.⁴⁴

An important consequence of this new British political initiative in South-Eastern Europe was the measure taken by Ambassador Stratford Canning — with the permission of the British authorities — to re-establish the British consulate in the Danubian Principalities with both a political and an economic competence, as a point from which to observe the Russians' activities and also to promote more active trade in the Black Sea and on the lower Danube. After the abolition of the monopoly exercised by the Levant Company, free enterprise on the part of all the merchants was to be encouraged and chiefly the Ionians, who were eager to establish flourishing business in that area. A new consul, E.L. Buttle, a former clerk in the British Embassy in Constantinople, was designated, on 11 October 1825,⁴⁵ and took office on 5 May 1826, when he arrived in Bucharest.⁴⁶

The establishment of a British resident in the Romanian Countries proved to be a particularly inspired move on the part of the British government, for Russia now openly began a widespread diplomatic counter-offensive attempting to make up for the setback she had suffered during the events of 1821-1822. Taking advantage of the Porte's weakness and its desire to normalize relations with its strong Northern neighbour, the Czarist government imposed on the Turkish Empire the Akkerman Convention, which was signed on 25 September-7 October, 1826, and according to which Russia recovered, with no restrictions, her right to navigate in

⁴⁴ A.C. WOOD, *q.w.*, p. 202.

⁴⁵ W. EAST, *q.w.*, *Appendix*, I, p. 181.

⁴⁶ P.R.O., F.O., 352/12, part. 2, n. 6, pp. 276-279 v^o. Buttle was received in audience by Prince Grigore IV Dimitrie Ghica, on 11th June, 1826 (cf. N. IORGA, *A History of Anglo-Romanian Relations*, Bucharest, 1931, p. 61); he acted as general consul of Great Britain in the Principalities till his death on 29 September/11 October 1834, in Bucharest; he was buried at the Evangelical Church of the Wallachian capital [an announcement in the newspaper «Albina Românească», Yassy, V-VI (1833-1834), p. 353].

all the seas and waters of the Ottoman Empire; she also obtained the right to annex a second branch of the mouth of the Danube, the Sulina channel.⁴⁷ As far as the Romanian Countries were concerned the treaty restored their liberty to trade, with the obligation of assuring the Porte's supply of corn.

British trade in the Romanian Principalities did not in fact derive much profit from this stipulation of the Akkerman Convention, owing to the unexpected tension in the relations between Great Britain and the Ottoman Empire brought about by the latter's refusal to grant independence to the Greek people, who were then supported by Russia and France as well. The Black Sea and the Danube again became inaccessible to British trading ships. The naval battle at Navarino on 20 October 1827, during which Admiral Codrington's squadron, acting with French and Russian warships, destroyed the Turkish and Egyptian fleet under the command of Mehmed Ali, provoked a momentary breach in British-Turkish relations, and the British Ambassador in Constantinople was recalled on 28 December 1827. Taking advantage of the situation, Russia declared war on the Porte on 26 April 1828, and she again occupied the Danubian Principalities. Turkey was heavily defeated and was compelled to sign the peace treaty at Adrianople, on 2-14 September, 1829, with her inexorable enemy. Later she agreed to recognize Greece's Independence at the Conference of London, on 30 November.⁴⁸

The peaceful settlement of these controversial issues in 1829 put an end to conflict in this area for a longer period. The treaty of Adrianople obviously opened a new phase in the problem of navigation and international trade in the Black Sea and on the Danube, despite the right Russia had recently obtained to control the third branch of the river mouth, the channel of St. George also, so that she was now sole master of the three river mouths. Nevertheless some advances were then made in both the economic and the political development of the Romanian Principalities. The three Turkish strongholds on the banks of the Danube, Turnu, Giurgevo and Braila, together with their Wallachian hinterland, were returned to Wallachia. The Turkish monopoly in both Principalities was abolished when the supply of corn, butter, tallow, timber etc. to the Porte was no longer compulsory. The treaty made trade open to all kinds of merchandise, established the right of navigation on the Danube for Romanian ships, and granted her complete administrative autonomy.⁴⁹ All these stipulations encouraged agricultural

⁴⁷ P. GOGEANU, *q.w.*, p. 31.

⁴⁸ For all these details, see, chiefly M.S. ANDERSON, *The Eastern Question 1774-1923: A Study in International Relations*, London, 1966, pp. 64-74.

⁴⁹ *Tratat de pace între Măreala sa Împăratul tuturor Rossiilor și Înălțimea Sa Împăratul și Padișahul Otomanilor, încheiat la Adrianopole în 2 septembrie 1829* (Treaty of peace between His Majesty the Emperor of all Russias and the Padishah of the Ottomans, concluded in Adrianople on 2 September, 1829), Yassy, no date, pp. 17-23.

production in the Romanian countries, ensured the rapid integration of their foreign trade into international commerce, and also accelerated the process of their integration into the modern European community.

It was only after 1829 that British trade with the Romanian Principalities received a formal structure. As one would expect, the most active trading centres were to be the Danube ports of Braila and Galatz, where British vice-consulates were soon established. Michael Stourdza, the future Prince of Moldavia, addressed himself in rather a premonitory manner to the British Ambassador in St. Petersburg, Lord Heytesbury, on 19-31 January, 1830, expressing his hopes — which were later to be fully satisfied — for the intensification of British-Romanian commercial relations: « I have the honour to bring to Your Excellency's attention the question of the trading agreements which might be established between the two Principalities and Great Britain, and of the reciprocal advantages which would follow. The trade in question is in particular that of Moldavia, on account of the town of Galatz, which has the finest port on the Danube, and which also acts as entrepôt for the industrial and agricultural products of Wallachia . . . It follows then that in so far as trade is concerned . . . particular attention should be given to Moldavia . . . ».⁵⁰

There are several points to be made in summing up the manner in which the economic policy of the British government and trading circles developed from 1803 — when the right of free admittance of British trading ships to the Black Sea and the Lower Danube was obtained — up to 1829, when more favourable conditions were established for the full development of trade in this area of Europe.

First one must recognize that the main reasons for the British government's interest in this rather remote corner of Europe during the first decades of the 19th century were political and concerned the solution of the Eastern Question against the background of the deepening rivalry between Russia and Turkey and the emergence of various movements for the liberation of the Balkan peoples from the Porte's domination. These involved a great many diplomatic complications and manoeuvres, in which all the other continental powers were also engaged.

In pursuing her constant aim of maintaining the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire, which arose from her famous belief in the "balance of power", Great Britain also attempted to extend her markets at the same time and also to find raw materials in the Pontic area. The Danubian Principalities were able to satisfy all these desires to the full, but the results, in economic terms, did not prove to be those that had been anticipated between 1803 and 1829, not only because of the events which were to change the face of this area of the Continent, and the moderate interest

⁵⁰ P.R.O., F.O., *Turkey*, 97/402, f. 244.

shown by the Levant Company, which was still hindered by its traditional, obsolete methods and was finally abolished in 1825, but chiefly because the British government was obviously drawn in opposing directions by its political aims. Great Britain was to oscillate continually between Turkey and Russia between 1803 and 1815, alternating between alliance and belligerence with both Empires because of her chief interest, which was the defeat of Napoleonic France. After 1815, when Russian strength on the Lower Danube was continually growing, Anglo-Russian rivalry increased, and reached a climax during the revolutionary events of 1821-1822, when in support of the Porte Great Britain prevented the Czarist government from provoking a new war in this area. But the British leaders' desire to support the Greeks in their war of Independence prompted them to endeavour to obtain a new agreement with Russia and even with France, which from 1827 to 1829 again placed Britain in the camp of the Porte's enemies.

Whilst this complex political and diplomatic game was taking place during the quarter century from 1803 to 1829, Britain naturally had to consider the consequences of the alternate closing or opening of the Straits to her trade ships sailing towards the Black Sea. This created increasingly unfavourable conditions for the development of normal profitable trading activities with the Danubian Principalities, which were very badly affected by the monopoly which the Porte exercised over their foreign trade. Evidence of the continual oscillations of British diplomatic and trading circles on both the political and the economic level may also be inferred from the precarious existence of the first British consular representation in the Principalities, which was unofficially established in 1803, unofficially renewed in 1813, suppressed between 1816 and 1818 and finally re-established in 1826, when it finally obtained permanent legal status.

It is for these reasons that the period between 1803 and 1829 may be considered more than a preliminary exploratory phase in British economic penetration of the area of the Black Sea and the lower Danube. It was only after the peace treaty of Adrianople in 1829 that this penetration was to develop under new, more favourable conditions, as the political options of the British Government became more and more obvious. Then Great Britain chose to maintain a constant interest in preserving the *status quo* in the area and in firmly checking any attempt of Czarist Russia to expand towards the Straits and Constantinople.