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C. W. Crawley

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I

THE outbreak of the Greek revolt in 1821 found Europe politically in a frame of mind half exhausted, half expectant, and in any case unsettled. The ‘moral solidarity’ of the Quadruple Alliance had already been shaken by Castlereagh, who was abused at home as the ally of despotism, the accomplice of oppression. Alexander I, on the other hand, who had been hailed as the liberal and reforming Tsar, was coming to be regarded as the second pillar of the established order in Europe. After six years of troubled peace, Metternich was beginning to hope that his system was built up on solid foundations. But when Europe is at peace in herself, the East is too often ready to disturb her repose.

In the Treaties of 1815, Turkey was not mentioned and consequently not included in the implied guarantee of territory among the Powers. There was not even any specific guarantee of the treaties as a whole; Castlereagh, at first anxious for it (1815), afterwards objected to a proposal for a separate treaty of guarantee. But after the Greek revolt, he was inclined to treat Turkey as protected by the settlement of 1815, in so far as any Power was protected by it.¹ His view was consistently denied by Russia; for, by admitting it, Russia would have been renouncing a campaign of absorption, which was inevitable but probably less systematic than it appears in retrospect. In the Treaty of 1774 Russia had secured certain limited privileges for the Christians in Turkey; the Porte promised in general terms to give legal protection to the Christian worship and to churches, priests and pilgrims, without admitting any general right of interference by Russia. The treaty included more detailed stipulations of the same kind, together with some civil privileges in favour of the

¹ Webster, *Castlereagh*, pp. 51, 96, 163, 349, 378. Cf. Russian Declaration of War, 26 Apr. 1828, in *British and Foreign State Papers*, 15, 656. (This series is henceforward indicated by the reference *S.P.*)

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inhabitants of the Danubian Principalities and the Islands of the Archipelago, and promised to all subjects of the Porte a limited right of emigration. These rights were reaffirmed at Jassy in 1792 and extended to Serbia at the Treaty of Bucarest in 1812. They did not apply specially to the Morea.² Certain points in those treaties had been in dispute ever since. The Russian Cabinet liked always to have some unsettled claims which could be pushed forward at favourable moments as an excuse for further encroachment. There was little ground for interference (except in the Principalities) under the *letter* of the treaties; the Turks, unless provoked, seldom molested the Greek Church, which was rich and powerful. But the Russians used the treaties to put forward much wider and vaguer pretensions, which they hoped that Europe would take for granted. These were practically claims to civil as well as religious protection over all the Christians, claims considered by other Powers to be incompatible with the existence of the Turkish Empire as an independent government. It seemed better even that Turkey should disappear than that it should be managed by its traditional foe.

There was, therefore, a general impression, openly expressed outside the Cabinets and privately admitted within them, that the Turkish Empire must soon collapse. Alexander filled the stage of European politics, and the power of Russia loomed in the East all the more gigantic because it was indistinct. But the weakness of Turkey and the strength of Russia were both exaggerated. Little was known as yet of the firm and ruthless character of Mahmud II: few people had the means of discovering how weak were the foundations on which the appearance of Russian power really rested. The paper strength of the Russian army was out of all proportion to the effective force which could be concentrated on the Danube; the Decabrist conspiracy of Christmas, 1825, first revealed to the world the widespread dis-

² For commentary, see T. E. Holland, *The European Concert and the Eastern Question* (1885); *Treaty Relations of Russia and Turkey, 1774–1753* (1877). Hertslet's *Map of Europe by Treaty* contains some of the relevant clauses in the Appendix. The Russian interpretation is set forth in Prokesch v. Osten, *Geschichte*, III, 117: future references to this work are under the initials P. O.

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affection even among the highest ranks. Almost all of those implicated were under thirty years of age, and belonged to the flower of the Russian corps of officers; they inherited the traditions of the court of Catherine II and the ‘contagion’ picked up in Western Europe by the armies which fought Napoleon on the soil of Germany and France. Yet this revolutionary movement was national and characteristically Russian. Among those who directed Russian policy, there was a real desire for commercial supremacy in the Black Sea and for a secure commercial outlet to the Mediterranean. These objects might be achieved by treaties. But mere increase of territory was an object quite foreign to the general progress of the people. Russia was not over-crowded, and had no indefensible frontiers: many Russians themselves recognised that the Empire had outgrown itself and needed overhauling. The administration was hopelessly corrupt: Alexander began with good intentions of reform, but the system was too strong for him. Others who were less anxious for reform yet feared that the possession of Constantinople would split the Empire in two, change its centre of gravity, and take from St Petersburg and Moscow their unchallenged pre-eminence. Religious and racial sympathy for the subjects of the Porte could easily be excited on occasion, but did not yet exert a continuous or compelling pressure upon the Government, whose foreign policy was directed mainly by men of foreign extraction. The first beginnings of a Pan-Slav movement in 1823 were confined to an obscure group without influence or publicity, though the ramifications of the Greek *Hetaireia* were much wider.³

Belief in the irresistible power of Russia died hard, but it alternated with an equally foolish contempt. The English ambassador at St Petersburg used the language of paradox when he wrote in June 1829 that “Russia possesses fewer and less formidable means of *aggression* than any other of the Great Powers... The long continuance of the delusion was due to military display and to the high tone assumed by Russian agents in foreign Courts”.⁴

³ K. Waliszewski, *Le Règne d'Alexandre I, 1818–1825*, pp. 13, 165, 175. *Les Rapports de Lebzeltern*, Introd. p. lxxiii.

⁴ Heytesbury to Aberdeen, 29 June 1829, *F.O. Russia*, 180.

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He was thinking no doubt especially of the blustering but wily Pozzo di Borgo in Paris and of Prince Lieven and his wife in London. Of the first, Canning said in 1824: “I know that Russia governs Continental Europe through Pozzo, now, nearly as absolutely as she heretofore governed Poland through Poniatowski”.⁵ Of Princess Lieven and her husband—for that is the order which more truly represents the influence of Alexander’s ‘two ambassadors in London’—much has been written. The princess corresponded regularly and intimately with Lord Grey on political matters: she was on terms of friendship in turn with Castlereagh and Metternich, then with Canning, Aberdeen and even Wellington. Although she feared and hated democracy in every shape, her ambitious temperament could never be content with ultra-Tory passivity: it was her business to know the men in office, and she saw when Liberalism might be turned to the account of Russia. She certainly exaggerated her own influence, and boasted of a power which she did not really possess. But she gave constant and faithful reports to Count Nesselrode at St Petersburg of the shades of political feeling in England, and she made ministers feel that Russian diplomacy was a formidable weapon.

Everywhere Russian agents served their imperial master ably, devotedly and unscrupulously, making it their one aim to increase the power and prestige of the Tsar, and constantly outstripping the instruction of their Foreign Office, which sometimes offered a mild rebuke and sometimes quietly accepted the results. While Russia was professing sympathy for her ‘co-religionaries’ of Greece, she was steadily absorbing the independent ‘Christian’ populations of Georgia and Circassia, and penetrating Persia by gradual encroachments. Moreover, these conquered peoples were treated with little ceremony: in 1830 more than 200,000 Armenians of Erzerum were inveigled across the Russian frontier with fair promises of deliverance from Turkish misrule; a few months later the remnant tried half-starving to return to their homes, but the frontier guards would not let them pass. The

⁵ Canning to Wellington, 8 Oct. 1824, in Wellington’s *Despatches* (N.S.), II, 316; cf. Metternich, *Mémoires*, 639.

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wretched people of the Principalities, oppressed by their Greek ruling princes, dreaded the Russian armies of occupation as much as they resented the coming of a Russian officer to raise a revolt in the name of Greek liberty.⁶ The Greeks of the Morea had cause to remember how Catherine II in 1770 had encouraged them to revolt, and, when the diversion had served her turn, had abandoned them to a terrible vengeance.

Other Powers feared these encroachments not only from sentiments of national rivalry but for definite material reasons. Their treaties with Turkey, which were on the whole faithfully observed, allowed them great freedom of commerce, because the Turks had no desire to compete. The proud and lazy Turk left commerce within the Empire to his Greek and Armenian *rayahs*, and to the Franks if they chose to come; until 1803 the English ambassador at Constantinople was primarily a servant of the Levant Company of Turkey Merchants, dissolved in 1825. But Russian tariffs were high, and aimed at exclusion: soon there were complaints that our considerable trade with Central Asia was threatened by the Russian advance. Moreover the fear of a Russian fleet in the Mediterranean and for the safety of the British Empire in India—or of the future line of communication with India—was beginning to be vaguely felt.⁷

Russian policy had a definite aim of expansion, which was pursued—subject to the vagaries of Alexander I—throughout the Greek revolt up to the successful climax of the Peace of Adrianople. The only hesitation was between the policy of downright conquest and that of keeping Turkey as a feeble neighbour to whom Russia could dictate at will. The latter policy promised less complication for the unity of Russia and less trouble with the other Powers; in 1829 it was from choice or necessity adopted

⁶ On early Anglo-Russian rivalry in Persia, see Sykes, *History of Persia*; Webster, *Castlereagh*, p. 35; and below, chap. xv. On the Armenians, Gordon to Palmerston, 26 Feb. 1831, in *F.O. Turkey*, 198, and G. F. Martens, *Recueil, Nouveaux Suppléments*, III, 303. Reports of Col. Blutte on the Russian occupation of the Principalities, 1828–30, in *F.O.* 97/402. Cf. I. L. Evans, *The Agrarian Revolution in Rumania*, p. 192.

⁷ On trade, see a letter from G. Ross, 26 Jan. 1830, in *F.O. Russia*, 189. The Russian tariff was raised in 1822 and again in 1828. On India, see chap. xv below; cf. Heytesbury to Aberdeen, 16 Jan. 1830, *ibid.* 185.

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for the time, and led four years later to an actual treaty of protective alliance with the Turks at Unkiar Skelessi. Russian ambition, however natural with such neighbours as the Turks, was inevitably feared and disliked. The ‘Russian menace’ was not, as the Whig tradition held, a mere bogey: but Tory panic could not help British commerce. As Joseph Planta wrote in 1821: “The Turks will hold the Russians a long Tug before the latter get to Constantinople”. English trade with Turkey was increasing rapidly throughout the Greek revolt, and, though partly interrupted by the Russian war in 1828–9, recovered immediately to a greater volume than before. Our export trade to the Baltic, on the other hand, remained stationary, owing partly to the high tariffs imposed by Russia and partly to the fact that much of the Mediterranean trade had been diverted to the Baltic during the Napoleonic wars, and now returned to its normal course. Yet our export trade to Russia was, until the forties, the more important, and our imports of raw materials from Russia were immeasurably greater than from Turkey. A war with Russia would, in the twenties, hurt more people in England than could a war with Turkey, especially as the former might mean the closing of the Dardanelles and the interruption of the Turkey trade as well. During the forties, the position changed, and our export trade to Turkey became the more important, continuing to increase while exports to Russia actually declined.⁸

Indifference might allow Russia to advance her plans by mere bluff, but premature and public alarm was both impotent and undignified. The middle course, which Canning attempted to follow and Palmerston found it increasingly hard to maintain, was to keep a watchful eye against undue encroachment, and to forestall it without needlessly exciting the enmity of Russia. A conflict might after all be inevitable, but Wellington’s impotent irritation was even more harmful than Whig indifference. Lord Grey wrote in 1821 to Lord Holland: “The danger arising from the extension of the Russian power and influence on that side is so remote and contingent as to bear no degree of comparison

⁸ J. Planta to S. Canning, 8 Aug. 1821, in Webster, *Castlereagh*, pp. 582–3. See Appendix II for comparative tables of trade with Russia and Turkey.

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with the certain evil of the existence of the Turkish Empire”
But twelve years later he wrote less confidently:

I certainly have not much more fear than you have of an attack upon India though this is not to be entirely put out of view. But with the influence which Russia is likely to obtain in the new Government of Greece—with that which events seem likely to give her in Turkey, the danger of her power in that quarter of the world is not remote.⁹

It is not always fair to quote isolated judgments as evidence of altered opinions, and something may be put down to Grey’s increasing age and conservatism; but the change of tone after the experience of these years in Eastern affairs was common to so many Englishmen that it cannot be disregarded.

The question for the people of the Balkans was whether it was worth while to exchange Turkish for Russian misrule.¹⁰ The Sultan’s *rayahs* had little cause to envy the Poles or the Moldavians in 1830: but at least his late *rayahs* of the Greek peninsula had shaken off one yoke without succumbing to the other. How was this result achieved?

II

Since the middle of the eighteenth century, the Greeks had grown steadily in wealth and population.¹¹ The cultural revival

⁹ Trevelyan, *Lord Grey*, p. 227, Nov. 1821; p. 355, Jan. 1833.

¹⁰ Cf. *Coup d’Œil sur la Turquie*, by A. Mavrocordato (? 1820), printed in P. O., iv, 1–54, esp. 52–4. But it was only ‘European’ Greeks who fully recognised the danger. The mass of the people were devotedly attached to Russia by the ties of religion, and looked to her for salvation. Mavrocordato proposed a Greek Empire, giving Russia the southern shore of the Black Sea: he did not mind letting Serbia go to Austria. Yet the Serbs had already a far more real national existence than the Greeks.

¹¹ According to *New Portifolio*, II, 367, the population of the Morea was trebled between 1790 and 1820. That is probably an exaggeration. In 1823 it may have been about 400,000 (Green, *Sketches of the War in Greece*, p. 299), but cf. a statistical table (compiled from Pouqueville) in *S.P.* 11, 303. At the end of the eighteenth century the Morea exported a crop of currants worth eight million pounds annually, of which five-eighths went to England—Beaujour, *Tableau du Commerce de la Grèce* (1800), p. 132. The currant crops of the Morea in the years preceding the revolt were not equalled by those of 1840 after ten years of external peace—F. Strong, *Greece as a Kingdom* (1842), a volume of statistics.

The origins of the revolution are traced in detail in Finlay’s *History*, II. The following are only a few points which seem to bear most on the troubles which followed the revolution. For the system of government in European Turkey, particularly the Morea, see Appendix VI (d).

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was practically confined to the Greek communities in European cities, and to some extent the Ionian Islands. The chief centres abroad (outside Russia) were Paris, Vienna and Trieste. Lord Guilford's efforts to found a University at Corfu were discouraged by the High Commissioner, Maitland, who distrusted his Philhellenic enthusiasm and his conversion to the Orthodox Church. After Maitland's death the University was established in 1824, but ceased to flourish much after the death of its eccentric patron three years later. Conditions among the Greeks varied enormously. The islanders of the Archipelago had got possession, during the Napoleonic wars, of the carrying trade of the Levant under the protection of the Russian flag, and big fortunes had been made by the shipowners of Hydra and Spezzia, who were of Albanian origin—Konduriottes, one of the first Presidents of Greece, could hardly speak the Greek language. Syra and other islands shared in the prosperity. These islanders enjoyed something like independence, merely paying to the Capitan Pasha (the Turkish admiral and governor of the Archipelago) a yearly tribute collected by one of their own notables (called 'primates'), and in some cases sending a quota of men to the Turkish fleets. Although the municipal government was in the hands of a few of the richest men, the ships' crews always shared with the captain and the owner a fixed proportion of the profits, and decisions were taken by quarter-deck committees. There was consequently no discipline, and the Greeks, though good sailors, and good pirates, never had an organised navy during the revolt.

The peasants of the Morea were hard-working and fairly prosperous, but superstitious and fanatical. Since the unsuccessful revolt in 1770, the scourge of the brigand *klephts* had been increasing. But the *klephts* were not really a separate class; they were recruited from the same homes which they afterwards found it exciting and profitable to live by plundering. Even thirty years later Edmond About could write in an entertaining satire on the kingdom of Greece:

Ce n'est pas que les brigands épargnent leurs compatriotes et réservent leurs rigneurs pour les étrangers: mais un Grec dépouillé par ses frères se dit avec une certaine résignation que son argent ne sort pas

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de la famille. La population se voit piller par les brigands comme une femme du peuple se sent battre par son mari, en admirant, comme il frappe bien. Les moralistes indigènes se plaignent de tous les excès commis dans la campagne, comme un père déplore les fredaines de son fils. On le gronde tout haut, on l'aime tout bas; on serait bien fâché qu'il ressemblât au fils du voisin, qui n'a jamais fait parler de lui.¹²

Across the Isthmus, in Attica and Acarnania, life was even more unsettled. The *armatoli*, a sort of Christian police licensed by the Turks to carry arms under their own chieftains, often became mere robber bands: they were being gradually disarmed and replaced by fierce Mussulman Albanians. Lawlessness was least in the country governed with ruthless methods and a show of enlightened policy by Ali Pasha of Yanina, who had made himself practically independent of the Sultan.

The lower clergy were ignorant and not always saintly; they depended upon their occasional fees to support their families. The bishops were maintained by taxes upon laity and clergy, and were taxed in turn by their superiors; their standard of learning was low. The primates, usually small landowners invested by the Pasha with civil authority, lived at their ease, imitating Turkish dress and manners. Each district collected the tribute due to the Sultan, sometimes through its own elected representatives; the primates had a chosen agent (*Vekil*) at Constantinople, who with the Patriarch of the Greek Church was consulted on all the affairs of the *rayahs*. In administration and justice the hand of the Pasha fell as heavily upon Mohammedan as upon Christian subjects: indolence made him more capricious than systematically cruel. Finlay says that the Greeks enjoyed as much practical freedom as the French under Napoleon, and much more than Italians or Poles under their foreign masters. But the Christians alone were subject to the hated *haratch*, or poll-tax, and to certain galling distinctions of dress and privilege. The tax was not in most provinces collected in proportion to the existing population, but had been assessed at a lump sum at the time of the original conquest. Consequently provinces which had grown in population paid at a very low rate and others much

¹² *Le Roi des Montagnes*, c. 2.

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too highly. Two-thirds of the land was owned by the Turks, whom the active-minded Greeks despised for their stolidity and ignorance. A fair proportion of the Greeks were traders who could read and write: they conducted all the Turks' business and manned their fleets. Such a relation between master and servant bred obstinate pride in the one, venality and faithlessness in the other. A sense of injustice, a growing measure of prosperity and power, combined with religious zeal to bring about this revolt of a half-Eastern people, agricultural and trading, preserving a form of municipal government, but almost untouched by Western political ideas. The French Revolution had indeed some echoes even in Greece. Napoleon had sent emissaries to the Morea, and recruited his Ionian regiments from among the *klephts* of the mainland; the Pasha of Yanina used to wear the tricolour, and the highland clans of Maina were found praying before a portrait of Napoleon beside that of the Virgin Mary.¹³ But these were mere symbols, without the revolutionary spirit. The people were ready at the bidding of their priests and of the itinerant preachers to join the ranks of the *klephts* and to drive out the infidel from Greece: all had a prospect of sharing in the spoil, and the Primates hoped to replace the Pashas. They took little thought of what Greece was to be when the Turks should be gone.

The famous *Hetaireia* was founded at Odessa in 1814 and removed its headquarters two years later to Moscow. Its professed aim was with the aid of Russia to restore the Greek Empire at Constantinople, but almost all revolutions have had a similar war-cry, which the more intelligent know in their hearts to be visionary or premature. The most probable issue was a status like that of the Danubian Principalities under a native prince paying tribute to the Porte. This prospect suited the views of Russia, whose consuls and agents were often implicated in the

¹³ The *Voyage de D. et N. Stephanopoli en Grèce, 1797–1798* (Paris, an VIII), is an extraordinary tale, written in the rapturous strains of the revolutionary period, of a mission from Napoleon to offer French liberty to the Mainot chiefs. The author, a Corsican herbalist, mingles together military speculations, romantic encounters with Mainot maidens, advertisements of his medical skill, and complaints of his losses in the service of Napoleon.