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“WILL RUSSIA MAKE WAR OR NOT?”: JAMES YEAMES’ REPORT ON THE EASTERN QUESTION

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ABSTRACT

James Yeames was the British Consul General in Odessa from 1819 to 1854. He was renowned for his meticulous and trustworthy reports on both the commercial and diplomatic matters. John Lord Ponsonby, the British Ambassador to Istanbul, feared that the Russians might invade Istanbul and the Straits whenever necessary. Therefore, Ponsonby requested Yeames for information regarding the status and activities of the Russian army and navy. Yeames’ reports were beneficial to Ponsonby, even though he was a consul with a mandate to deal only with commercial matters and lacked formal training in diplomacy. This study introduces and transcribes the comprehensive and detailed report prepared by Yeames on February 10, 1839.

Keywords: James Yeames, Lord Ponsonby, Eastern Question, Ottoman Empire.

“RUSYA SAVAŞ AÇACAK MI AÇMAYACAK MI?”: JAMES YEAMES’İN DOĞU SORUNU ÜZERİNE RAPORU

ÖZ

James Yeames 1819-1854 yılları arasında Odesa’da İngiliz Başkonsolosu olarak görev yaptı. Hem ticari hem de diplomatik konularda hazırladığı titiz ve güvenilir raporlarıyla tanınmaktaydı. İngiltere’nin İstanbul Büyükelçisi John Lord Ponsonby, Rusların kendileri için uygun gördükleri vakitte İstanbul’u ve Boğazları işgal edebileceğinden endişe etmekteydi. Ponsonby, bu nedenle, Yeames’ten Rus ordusunun ve donanmasının durumu ve faaliyetleri hakkında bilgi aktarmasını istedi. Sadece ticari meselelerle ilgilenmesi emredilen bir konsolos olduğu halde ve diplomasıyla ilgili özel bir eğitimi olmamasına rağmen Yeames, Ponsonby’nin oldukça faydalı bulacağı raporlar gönderdi. Bu çalışmada, Yeames’in 10 Şubat 1839 tarihli kapsamlı ve ayrıntılı raporu tanıtılmış ve transkripsiyonu sunulmuştur.

Anahtar Sözcükler: James Yeames, Lord Ponsonby, Doğu Sorunu, Osmanlı Devleti.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Lord Ponsonby, the British Ambassador to Istanbul, would never forget the Russian fleet he encountered on May 1, 1833, when he arrived at the Bosphorus. In the belief that Russia's foremost interests rested in capturing Istanbul and the straits, he worked tirelessly throughout his ambassadorship to prevent the Russians from returning to Istanbul. Therefore, he acted under the premise that the Russians who had left Istanbul after the Treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi could return whenever they saw fit unless Britain took vigorous and determined action. Information from Russia's southern ports of Odessa and Sevastopol was essential for him to clarify his policy in Istanbul, to make sense of the reports he would send to London, and to be able to rely upon the British navy, which had anchored the Aegean Sea since 1833, in the event of a crisis. James Yeames (1789-1864), the British Consul General in Odessa, was fortunately the best candidate for the position. Since 1819, when he succeeded his father, William Savage Yeames (?-1819), as Consul General in Odessa, he has been renowned for his thorough and trustworthy reports. Walther Kirchner (1975, p. 207) notes that he was acknowledged with talent and regarded as one of the most gifted consuls of the British Empire.

2. James Yeames

The origins of the Yeames family as landowners and manors in Norfolk date back to the fourteenth century (Smith, 1927, p. 21). His grandfather, John Lambe Yeames (1707-1787), established the family connection with Russia, which his descendants kept until the twentieth century. He built "Russia's first frigates and twelve men-of-war at Archangel" after accepting Catherine the Great's request to supervise the Russian Navy's construction. He became "Surveyor of the Russian Navy" after raising "General" (Smith, 1927, p. 25). James's father, Henry Savage Yeames, became the first British Consul General of the Black Sea (Smith, 1927, p. 25). He co-founded the first British mercantile house in the region with his brother, William, consul at Taganrog (Sifneos, 2018, p. 72). After his father's death, James Yeames continued the post with the same status in April 1819 (Smith, 1927, p. 25). After 35 years as a consul-general in Odessa, he resigned in April 1854 with the outbreak of the Crimean War (House of Commons, 1858, p. 296) and returned to England, where he passed away in 1864 (Morning Post, 29 July 1864, p. 8).

Yeames was sent to Odessa by Sir Thomas Maitland, the governor of Malta, to form a commercial establishment as an agent for supplies for the island in 1814 (House of Commons, 1858, p. 296). He was responsible for purchasing corn. (Sultana, 1969, p. 20). However, this initiative was short-dated. His position as an agent for Malta was without official recognition of the Russian government. He temporarily served as the Austrian Lloyd Steamship Company's representative in Odessa (Rördansz, 1818, p. 687). Then, he was directly appointed consul general in 1819. He contributed to the development of Odessa, where the population increased from 20.000 to 95.000 during his residency (House of Commons, 1858, p. 296).

He did not get any salary until 1825; before that, he depended upon fees. Due to the rising importance of Odessa, he obtained a salary. Fees were not large and not regulated but assimilated with the fees of the Mediterranean. His annual salary began at £800, then reduced to £600, and shortly after increased to £750 (House of Commons, 1858, p. 297).

He had no instruction to report political issues, but he did not hesitate to write to Istanbul and London on a particular subject regarding political events bearing directly political upon commercial activities. Despite the great distance between St. Petersburg and Odessa, Yeames was acquainted with political matters and corresponded with Foreign Office and different ambassadors in a private way. Yeames summarizes his position as follows:

A man of ordinary intelligence will have his attention fixed on all occurring around him, particularly on events that may influence the interests entrusted to his charge. Supposing those interests are commercial interests, there are many political events that must have an influence upon those commercial interests; for instance, military movements, and preparations of military and naval forces, all of which mutters have an influence upon trade, and I never failed reporting them home (House of Commons, 1858, p. 299).

When he was appointed to Odessa, Yeames knew little Russian, and then he became fluent for common purposes. However, all diplomatic correspondence in Russia is conducted in French (House of Commons, 1858, p. 299).

2.1. Yeames' Influence on Ponsonby

The Consulate-General in Odessa was primarily subordinate to the British Embassy in St. Petersburg. However, the intelligence gathered by Yeames was of considerable value to the Istanbul Embassy as well. Consequently, Yeames communicated with the Istanbul Embassy before Ponsonby (GRE/E/392/65; GRE/E/687/24). Yeames had reported the Greek question of 1821 in detail and contributed critical information to formulating the British position (Jewsbury, 1999). Istanbul was occasionally used in letters for practical reasons. Due to security concerns, dispatches sent via St. Petersburg were subject to delays (GRE/E/687/24). During Ponsonby's service as ambassador, the flow of information continued to expand. Yeames sent one copy of the reports he prepared for the Foreign Office through St. Petersburg and the other through Istanbul. Ponsonby could examine his dispatches because he sent them to Istanbul disguised as flying seals. In the case of dispatches marked as top secret, he prepared a second copy and sent it separately to Ponsonby (GRE/E/687/187). Lord Durham, British Ambassador to St. Petersburg from 1835 to 1837, wished to prevent dispatches from being sent via Istanbul because he believed Yeames was unfavorable to the Russians. However, the Foreign Office determined that using Istanbul was advantageous and made no modifications. Therefore, as will be seen, Yeames was to send Ponsonby

several private letters containing his evaluations (GRE/E/322/D/34; GRE/E/322/D/42).

Ponsonby requested that Yeames keep him apprised of Russia's military operations in Sevastopol and Odessa. Yeames then began sending Ponsonby regular updates on Russia's military activity along the southern coast (GRE/E/687/1; GRE/E/687/2; GRE/E/687/6; PP/i/GC/PO/199). Both were worried about Russia's operations against the Circassians in the Caucasus, the threat to Danube traffic, and its activities in Central Asia. As a result, the subject matter of the correspondences progressively expanded to include these issues as well (GRE/E/687/4; GRE/E/687/11; GRE/E/687/49).

The reports and letters of Yeames frequently were praised as "excellent," "quite good," and "very useful" (GRE/E/322/D/53). This was not unexpected. In the 1830s, Britain had not established sufficient consulates in the region encompassing Anatolia. Therefore, the ministry lacked credible information regarding these regions. In addition, Yeames had developed intimate ties with the local authorities in Odessa, where he had resided for many years. He compared the information he received from them with information from unofficial sources (Seely, 2001, p. 26). Additionally, Yeames traveled frequently to the regions that were the focus of his reports. For instance, he would conduct investigations in Circassia and the Danube region (GRE/E/687/26-45; GRE/E/687/46; GRE/E/687/55; GRE/E/687/56-65). Ponsonby and the British Foreign Office were grateful for the intelligence Yeames provided (PP/GC/PO/357; PP/GC/PO/412). In 1837, immediately following the Vixen incident, he was requested by the ministry to make a presentation in London about the issues regarding the Black Sea (GRE/E/687/49). Yeames, whose reports on the region had previously influenced the Foreign Office's policies, delighted all his superiors, including Palmerston, with whom he frequently interacted during this journey (GRE/E/313/13-18; GRE/E/240/104). His request for a remuneration increase was therefore considered (GRE/E/322/D/32). Strangways, the Undersecretary of the Foreign Office, who was keenly interested in the Circassian issue, pushed for an increase in his salary and succeeded (GRE/E/322/D/34; GRE/E/322/D/42).

In 1838, a resurgence of the Egyptian question was deemed inevitable, and the Great Powers feared the Sultan would attack Mehmet Ali. In such a scenario, it was believed that the Ottoman army would be defeated, and with Istanbul in danger, the Sultan would once again rely on the Russians for assistance in accordance with the Treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi. Ponsonby, who felt the Russians could mobilize their forces without permission, feared the Russian navy and army could arrive permanently. This reinforced Ponsonby's reliance on Yeames's information, whom he praised (GRE/E/687/68). In addition to his dispatches, Yeames kept Ponsonby apprised of the Russian navy and army throughout 1838 via several private correspondences (GRE/E/687/76; GRE/E/687/80).

By October 1838, Yeames no longer believed Russia planned to declare war against Turkey or seize Istanbul. He communicated to the ambassador some of his reasoning regarding this. He cited such reasons as the fact that Europe had become more knowledgeable and vigilant against the Russian threat since the Treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi, that Britain's interests in Turkey had become more important thanks to the Treaty of Balta Limanı, and that Britain could defeat all Russian moves just by bringing its fleet into the Black Sea. According to him, the only way for the Russians to visit Istanbul was if they were invited by the Sultan (GRE/E/687/82).¹⁶ Ponsonby requested that Yeames compose a memorandum detailing these ideas. He inquired, "Will Russia make war or not?" On February 10, 1839, Yeames sent Ponsonby a lengthy and comprehensive memorandum in response to this query.¹⁷ The report was drafted in response to this request.

3. CONCLUSION

Through his reports, Yeames influenced the British Foreign Office and British Embassy in Istanbul's Eastern policy, having earned the respect and trust of his superiors through his knowledge and experience. Among these, the report on the Eastern Question dated February 10, 1839, and addressed to Ponsonby merits special consideration due to its scope, influence, and preparation time. For this reason, the transcription of this report is provided in the appendix for the perusal of researchers.

¹⁶ After the Battle of Nizip, Ponsonby would be persuaded by Yeames' reports that Russia was in too precarious a position to attack Turkey. Yeames stated that the Russian army and navy were not prepared for war, that Russia was too busy in Circassia, that Russia's finances were in poor condition, and that Russia was experiencing famine in its southern provinces (PP/GC/PO/419; PP/GC/PO/442; GRE/E/687/179; GRE/E/687/188; GRE/E/687/191).

¹⁷ Yeames also sent this memorandum to Strangways (GRE/E/322/E/9).

APPENDIX

Transcription of James Yeames' report (GRE/E/687/89-141).

[p. 1]

February 10, 1839

Odessa

(His Excellency, The Lord Ponsonby, G.C.B.)

My lord,

Your Excellency having been pleased to approve, in flattening terms, of some partial views, exposed by me, of the present state of affairs in this part of the world, has further honored me by expressing a desire, that my opinions should be more fully developed; and the question is in consequence again put forth "Will Russia make war or not?" The inquiry was, I am aware, limited by me within too narrow limits; but if followed up, it must [p. 2] of necessity embrace general considerations; these have in truth long and anxiously occupied my mind, and I am now going to submit them to Your Excellency, as concisely as so weighty a subject will allow, but with all the freedom that is indispensable to its discussion:

Of the numerous books and pamphlets published upon the "Eastern Questions", but few have reached me here, and those accidentally. Their writers exhibit great ability, and they treat the parts they handle with admirable acuteness; but most of them appear to be carried away [p. 3] by some leading and favorite idea, and in their eager pursuit of a partial view, to become too much identified with the different causes they set up, leaving out of sight, and indeed without searching for, the real and a common source of present difficulties. Thus, in their character of partizans, and inlisting the passions, they have obscured and envenomed the "Eastern Question", in every meaning of the term so popularly used. One, embracing a part in the contest now pending between the sovereign of Turkey, and his Viceroy in Egypt, advocates nothing less than an [p. 4] immediate dismemberment, and unmindful of the consequences would recklessly abandon the Black Sea and the Bosphorus to Russia; and then, setting up a visionary empire, would have England seek a compensation in Arabia. On another side, Russia is held up to universal execration; in the blindness of animosity her most legitimate interests are questioned, and her rights denied; she is declared to be a natural enemy, resolved upon conquest and destruction, and England herself is threatened with invasion, till the nation, inflamed by fear [p. 5] and hatred, has imagined Russians in Canada and Afghanistan, and to be the secret cause of every disaster.

These writers had a noble task before them, of immense benefit to their country, in drawing its attention to facts and a course of events of vital

importance, upon which ignorance and a strange indifference prevailed; but unfortunately some have overdone it, and by their extravagances, they have, instead of enlightening, rather bewildered their countrymen; they have moreover not only exasperated, but too often instructed our adversaries; and what is to be most deprecated, they have in [p. 6] their party spirit, striven to lower England in the estimation of the world, depreciating alike her moral character, and her power.

In a dispassionate view of the “Eastern Question”, all parties will, I believe, agree, that Turkey in her present precarious state, is the subject matter; that Russia, being, by circumstances natural to her position, the most interested, is therefore the most active agent externally bearing upon it: that other European Powers have an interest, if not in the entire preservation of the Ottoman Empire, in preventing it to become the means of a dangerous aggrandizement [p. 7] to Russia.

If we seek for the essence of the Eastern Question, we shall find it to be in the security of the Bosphorus: here it becomes tangible and seated on a narrow field, upon which all adverse interests must meet in close collision; and on its issue will depend the several questions of Egypt with Syria; of the Black Sea with the trades to Trebizond and the Danube; of the fate of Asia Minor; of the independence of Persia; and even of predominance in Central Asia, all of them collateral or secondary, however important each in itself.

Of all the several interests held [p. 8] by foreign Powers in the Bosphorus, that of Russia is the most immediate, because it is one vital to the prosperity, safety and very existence of the best parts of her Empire. An interest thus founded will grow silently and justly into a right, which in this instance has of late been allowed, by a rapid course of events, to be further consolidated; and Russia will never consent, and she is now too strong to suffer, that it should fall under the control of any hostile Power. It is therefore to be presumed that Russia will carry on war to extremity, rather than see a right of this kind endangered or menaced; [p. 9] and such a menace may drive her into war, precipitately, in order to attempt securing it for ever after, either by achieving the conquest of Constantinople, or more conveniently, by reducing the Sultan to the acknowledged condition of a Vassal, with a subsidiary army, and a Russian fleet stationed in the Golden Horn. But, if Russia has an interest so deep at stake, England and Austria and other Powers, for their self preservation, have one not less positive to prevent, at every cost, the permanent possession of those straits by Russia: and no one, unless infatuated by his own visions, will contemplate [p. 10] without dejection the possibility of Russia becoming absolute mistress of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles; and of her establishing, when there seated on the ruins of the Ottoman Empire, an inexpugnable base for subsequent aggressions. As existing interests in her provinces have given her rights in the Bosphorus, so would new interests, formed on the advanced position, extend those rights further on, and to limits it would be too bold to define. The power of Russia

as at present restrained within the Black Sea, is in a great degree latent; but with a vent opened by the conquest of Constantinople, [p. 11] it will immeasurably and most fearfully dilate. Her maritime force, now incipient in Sevastopol, would then swell to formidable dimensions; the provinces on the Danube, and those of Bulgaria, of Servia, of Roumelia, as well as the whole of Asia Minor, would be subdued; on one side, a new field would be exposed to the exercise of her influence or of her arms, stretching to the very shores of the Adriatic; while on the other, Egypt, never destined to her powerful in her independence, would shrink from the approaching contact; equally certain would be the subjugation of Persia, eventually menacing [p. 12] our commerce in Central Asia; and then indeed might those apprehensions, now undefined and imaginary, for our Eastern Empire, be converted into an overwhelming conviction of imminent danger. With the enumeration of those consequences before us, what combination can we anticipate on the other hand sufficiently mighty to arrest the pressure of Russia, when once freed from her present shackles? Happily the evil has not been consummated, and there may perhaps be still time by a united effort to secure the fatal barrier, and to constrain the power of Russia within it, like the giant [p. 13] spirit of the Arabian tale confined a thousand years under the seal of Solomon.

The interest of Russia in the Bosphorus being then direct and imperative, she has persevered, since half a century, in one undeviating course of policy, never diverting her attention from it, so that all her acts and machinations, carried on in times of war or of peace, will be found to have always had a bearing upon that main object: while other nations, having a more distant and less distinct one in the question, and treating it only speculatively, have pursued no policy equally earnest or consistent. Thus in 1807, we urged the cession of Moldova and [p. 14] Wallachia in sovereignty to Russia; in the same year we sent a squadron against Constantinople in the cause of Russia; even the work of dismemberment was commenced by ourselves; and we joined in destroying the maritime force of Turkey, thereby further crippling her power of resistance for the preservation of the Bosphorus against Russia; in 1833, the Sultan was left in the hour of despair to throw himself into the arms of his natural enemy; and even to a much later period, opinions have continued distracted by Egypt and secondary questions, and seem to come with hesitation to some final determination. [p. 15] The Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi did, it is true, surprise and awaken European nations to a sudden perception of peril: England and Russia are therefore arrayed against each other, and the political knot, instead of being unravelled, is in imminent danger of the being severed by violence. As in all contentions a high degree of irritation has ensued, and what indifference on one side did before, so now anger on both may perniciously obscure every view of the subject. One great and most important truth has however become manifest; namely, it is upon the Bosphorus itself that Russia must be [p. 16] met foot to foot, and there only is the Eastern Question to be won or lost.

The security of the Bosphorus being thus identified with the Eastern Question, the peculiar circumstances in which it is involved are to be considered. During long course of years, the several nations in alliance with the Port, held of it rights common to all for the passage of those straits. The Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi first infringed the common character of those rights; and the Sultan, whether virtually independent or not, is responsible for the consequences. England and Austria had moreover lately [p. 17] acquired interests in the Black Sea, by their trade to Trebizond and the Danube, which are not connected with those of Russia, but are the objects of her jealousy. They had their origin, it is true, in two great oversights committed by the Russian Government; in the first instance, by the closure of Redout Kale to the transit trade, an egregious error in both senses commercial and political; and in the other, by the commercial emancipation of Moldavia, and Walachia, under the mask of disinterestedness; but (as we are justified by subsequent measures to infer) with a view to consequences very [p. 18] different from those, which are now the subject of extreme mortification. These interests are nevertheless irrevocably established, and they are destined, if under protection, to attain a high degree of importance. The Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi affects them injuriously; and no two states can have a right to conclude a treaty wherein the independent interests of other states are so committed. At one time all our concerns in the Black Sea were not only connected with, but to the benefit of, Russia: then there existed no pretext [p. 19] for insisting on the admission of our ships of war, and the demand on our part would in spirit have been captious and hostile; but now the case being widely altered, the preservation of our new interests has given us a right founded on justice and necessity. The late practise likewise of Russian ships of war passing freely through the channel has thrown down the principle adhered to by the Porte of excluding all armed vessels; and the exclusion of our own war flag is now become in spirit hostile to ourselves. All acquired political [p. 20] rights to be strong must not only be just, but also founded on a distinct interest. It was in the belief of grievances to be redressed, of interests to be protected, and of a general good to be secured, that Europe long viewed the progress of Russia in these quarters in silence and even with satisfaction; and when at length roused by our apprehensions, we first rose to resist further aggressions, our cause found little favor in the eyes of the world, merely because we failed in bringing forward to view interests sufficiently distinct and acknowledged in opposition [p. 21] to those of Russia. For this reason Russia was enabled to assume a lofty attitude, to repel our remonstrances, and to foil us successfully in specious and often scornful language. It was thus with the objections urged by us against those clauses of the Treaty of Adrianople, wherein the navigation of the Bosphorus was opened to all flags, and we ourselves with others were relieved from the disgrace of simulated documents. On that occasion being at St. Petersburg at the commencement of 1830, in an interview to which I was purposely invited by Count Nesselrode, he termed our arguments querulous [p. 22] and proceeding from a jealous and malevolent feeling; and, because I was supposed to be intimately

acquainted with the interests concerned, he requested me to explain to Lord Heytesbury, at that time our Ambassador, the benefits which I could not deny had really been conferred upon commerce in general. It was thus likewise, when interfering in Circassia, we carried no one along with us, though in a cause exciting generous sentiments; because our interest there was indistinct, and could not be wholly avowed, while that of Russia [p. 23] was positive. And the same principle was illustrated, when Russia placed her quarantine at Sulina; universal indignation and distrust were instantly inspired, everyone was against her, and her language became in her turn weak and embarrassed, for she could not assert a positive and acknowledged interest of her own on that position; and the act was clearly aggressive upon the established interests of other nations. So must be considered the treaty of Unkiar Skelessi, which though it may have been designed for the defence only of the great [p. 24] stake Russia holds in the Bosphorus, and not with views of future aggrandizement, is not the less a manifest usurpation upon other rights and injurious to them; and therefore it is impolitic, being unbearable and hateful to all.

The only just and real interests of Russia herself, as well as of other nations, in the Bosphorus are conservative; but instead of maintaining them thus, she has unhappily labored for their destruction; formerly common, they have been divided and are set in opposition to each other; all therefore, [p. 25] including her own, are endangered and may be engulfed by some political convulsion difficult for human wisdom to prevent or to foresee.

For maintaining security in the Bosphorus, there are only four lines of conduct open to pursuit; namely first, by temporizing measures; secondly, by war; thirdly, by an amicable settlement between all the Powers concerned; and fourthly, by a partial coalition in opposition to Russia.

The expedition which, in 1833, carried succours to the Sultan, caused a great moral revolution in the relations [p. 26] between Russia and Turkey. Since that period and under the progress of a temporizing policy pursued by England and other nations, the situation of affairs has become fraught with agitation and danger; it is now one of enmity engaged in repelling and in turn committing acts of silent hostility; it is so critical that of many imminent circumstances, one may hourly arise to precipitate an open rupture. On one side, an army and fleet are held in readiness to seize upon the Bosphorus; and on the other, armaments are kept up for observation [p. 27] and to counteract designs of aggressions; while the Sultan himself, bound by a degrading treaty, in his moral prostration, regards nothing beyond support to his personal authority, and heedless of the independence of his Empire, is more inclined to trust its natural enemy, than to place confidence in its friends. Of the two positions, thus opposed to each other, that of Russia has all the advantage; it costs her no effort to be prepared at Sevastopol; it must cost England extraordinary efforts to be adequately so in the Archipelago and elsewhere: [p. 28] bent upon one object, and diverted by no other, Russia maintains her

influence with the Porte by her consistency, as well as by the proximity of her power; while we are embarrassed with Egypt, and fettered by considerations that are injurious to our credit in the Turkish councils, and our power is less appreciated being seated at a distance. Under present circumstances time operates in favor of Russian views, and against our own: She may bide her time, and wait the course of events, over which she is exercising a [p. 29] certain control; she is at liberty to pursue her system of progressive encroachment, so measured as either to be speciously justified, or to baffle resistance; she may at her ease carry on her intrigues in Moldavia and Walachia, in Servia, in Egypt, and at length entangle irremediably her ill-fated ally in the meshes of her policy: she may also chose her time to strike a decisive blow, whether for her defence or her aggrandizement; and hastening the catastrophe, at the first propitious signal, plant her standard on the shores of the Dardanelles [p. 30] in defiance of the World. Against a multitude of overwhelming difficulties on the other side, British diplomacy has been left ostensibly single-handed, and unsupported by other Powers, who though equally interested have shrunk from the foremost rank of defence. Your Excellency's success to the present day may be truly deemed as miraculous; and that admirable structure of your hands, the Commercial Convention, will not fail to settle upon a firm foundation, if its enlightened principles are allowed, undisturbed and in the security [p. 31] of peace to work out their own results. But, while we remain in contention with Russia, will she not, as an adversary, be jealous of all our acts, and suspect them, however perversely, to be hostile to herself? In that case are we not to fear every obstacle from discontent, purposely fomented in the needy and weak Government of Turkey; and that occasional abuses by its corrupt functionaries, in other times easily redressed, may now be industriously converted into means of fatally embroiling us with the very people we [p. 32] are laboring to regenerate? In every view of the present state of contention for the security of the Bosphorus, protracted by temporizing measures, failure and disappointment are before us; the game thus played is a losing one; and the question arises, if it be not desirable that Turkey fall at once by violence and the force of arms, rather than that she should become thus gradually the prey of Russia, with her resources unbroken, and unincumbered by the embarrassments of a conquest.

On the subject of war I had [p. 33] the honor in a former dispatch of offering some considerations, which as bearing on the question of the Bosphorus, I must beg leave here to repeat. A war, where England is to be the principal, and arising out of present circumstances, and during the existing relations of the Porte with St. Petersburg will infallibly bring about the instant consummation of the very evil which now are most apprehending; for Russian troops will be called to the Dardanelles, and Turkey will thus be thrown forever after under the undisguised dominion of Russia, who is prepared for [p. 34] the emergency, and will consequently not be surprised, nor anticipated in this critical measure of defence. Of such a war therefore no idea will be entertained. But, were the Sultan to be roused from his infatuation,

and starting from the embrace of his ally, to assert his independence, and to set Russia at defiance at the risk of war, then as decidedly would the common interests of Europe be at once secured; for Turkey heretofore alone and therefore vanquished by her aspiring neighbour, would, it is to be presumed in this struggle for [p. 35] her existence, be aided by the Powers whom experience will have at length instructed in their own preservation. An Austrian army of observation in Transylvania or Hungary, and a British squadron in the Black Sea would menace every line of invasion, and enable Varna and Shumla once more to close the Balkan range.

The positions thus taken up by Great Britain and Austria, while necessitating no national sacrifices of magnitude, would be perfect in strategy for their simplicity and character of defence. From a base on the Danube become [p. 36] so exposed, Russian generals, bearing in mind too the enormous disasters of the last war, will not venture to advance. From Sevastopol an expedition would in truth be more feasible, though not less hazardous, than one from our side, when opposed to the Sultan; twelve thousand men might be thus thrown suddenly upon some point, but without supplies, in the face of an enemy, and exposed to be cut off by the timely arrival of a naval armament; for as to the Russian maritime force in this sea offering serious resistance, this cannot be thought [p. 37] probable; and having attempted no achievement even against the Turks, it would then rather seek safety within the defences of its own port. From the side of Asia Minor Turkey will be equally protected; for the first apparition of a British fleet will shake the dominion of Russia, on the south of the Caucasus, to its foundation, and a new revolution of opinion will entirely efface the one that was wrought by the display of 1833, and its effects will conspicuously vibrate far and wide to the center of Asia.

From this consideration of the [p. 38] subject of war, it will appear that notwithstanding his present degradation, it is the Sultan, who holds in suspense its fearful, results for either side; that, unconscious of his own power, he is nothing less than the arbiter of the great interests now in agitation; that, while Master of the Bosphorus, he stands upon the key-stone of the Eastern Question. Most strange must have been the course of European politicks, which has flung him, with such destinies in charge, prostrate at the feet of the only Power that has ever sought his humiliation and can covet his possessions; and [p. 39] which has made him turn away with distrust from the nations whose interests are bound up in the preservation of his Empire!

As by a temporizing policy we are inevitable conducted to a fatal termination of the present critical state of affairs; and war, whether understood as an expedient or eventual necessity, being in itself a fearful calamity; our thoughts will anxiously turn to the inquiry, if the elements of the Eastern Question may not be capable of a direct and pacific adjustment. Were it indispensable to embrace all the contingencies [p. 40] to which Turkey, in her disorganization, is liable, the proposition might intimidate, if not appear

utterly hopeless; but as the question is confined to the security of the Bosphorus, and further interference is not imperatively required, the subject will be relieved from such hazards and may be specially treated. Upon this particular ground foreign interests cannot be supposed in their nature irreconcilable, being all conservative, though jealousies and mutual apprehensions may have disfigured them. It is therefore not beyond reasonable hope that the several Powers [p. 41] concerned may be brought by a sense of present dangers to join, for their reciprocal and common protection, in some treaty to be founded on a full understanding and recognition of every real and just right.

Russia will be too prudent to persist in her offensive position in the Bosphorus, as soon as a line will have been defined, upon which to secure her own great and undisputed interest, as well as the safety and tranquillity of Europe. To maintain it then, would be on her part to avow a project of aggrandizement, and views hostile to the interests of Europe; and she would descend [p. 42] from that moral attitude, which it has been her ambition and good fortune to assume, and which has given her strength and consideration. No vital question between states of equal power can be safely rested excepting on justice, and to shift it from that ground would be a dangerous experiment. The position usurped by Russia in the Bosphorus, however formidable, is not secure from mischances; it may be overthrown even at the will of the Sultan; and by the admission of our fleets she may be involved in great danger and humiliation. The right of England to [p. 43] this admission is already the subject of just dread to Russian statesmen, and it will be for our own to judge, if in conciliations and for the furtherance of an amicable settlement, it may not be suspended or withdrawn. The language which Great Britain is entitled to hold is one of great boldness, though it may be in amity and concession. The two countries are closely united by their relations of commerce; we, and no others, are the great consumers of Russian produce, and British capital and demand are the life of industry, and spread blessings, throughout the Empire. To suspend [p. 44] these relations might bring inconveniences to ourselves; but to Russia it would inevitably and in a short course of time cause nothing less than the destruction of her internal prosperity; and her ministers may be made to understand how she has lost a hold as great upon ourselves. Of all countries, it was England that ever viewed with most satisfaction the progress of Russia in greatness; but the friendly sentiment has been of late more and more repelled by a mistaken policy and by a bearing of defiance; a feeling of impatience has in consequence [p. 45] arisen in its stead, and is growing, not merely in a party, but throughout the British people, ready to take alarm, and which will not brook further provocation. It is by a thorough knowledge of the extent, and a deep conviction of the truth and honesty, of these arguments that the momentous cause in question will be best advocated; and to compete otherwise with Russian diplomacy, so eminently qualified in artifice and intrigue, would be acting inconsistently with our character, and to give them the full advantage of their own.

The other Powers concerned in the [p. 46] question, though they may not all advocate with equal earnestness, will nevertheless support this proposition, both for the direct interest each may have in it, and for the general maintenance of peace; and in particular it will accord entirely with the temper of the Austrian government.

Turkey herself, as Mistress of the Bosphorus, must be benefited by a settlement having in view the security of those straits: she will at any rate to that extent acquire a new political stability in the opinion of the world; and she may perhaps thereby, among other advantages, obtain credit for a loan, [p. 47] to meet her immediate exigencies in room of the monopolies she has abandoned, until other sources of revenue are improved. Time, instead of operating in favor of aggression, will then operate in the consolidation of legitimate rights; the relations of commerce will be strengthened between Turkey and other nations; and the Commercial Convention working out its great benefits in the creation and progress of new interests will not fail to establish a solid foundation of future security.

In the proposal of such a settlement of the question, the sacrifice of [p. 48] no just interest will be required, and no party will be called to relinquish a recognized right; but all will have to join in their mutual safety, and for the accomplishment of a great common good; and should it be found to be impracticable, through perverseness, or by the entertainment of secret designs, its opposers will be unmasked, and its advocates will obtain honor and a moral advantage from the attempt.

In default of the general settlement imagined, the formation of partial coalition will next suggest itself. England has been hitherto left alone a prominent [p. 49] party, because a character peculiarly Asiatic has been given to the Eastern Question; whereas in truth it is as essentially European. Our great interests in Asia meet with but little sympathy, and the diversion of Russian ambition towards that direction has been viewed with complacency. But none of the great Powers is more nearly affected by this question than is Austria; for her position will become precarious and threatened, were Russia Mistress of the Bosphorus and of the adjacent provinces, and enabled to exercise a more direct influence in those peopled by the Slavonian [p. 50] race. I may be here allowed to relate that being in Vienne in 1837, Prince Metternich, pointing out to me those provinces on the map, said that while in the hands of Turkey they protected the frontiers of Austria, as much as the ocean did England. The Austrian statesman was never unmindful of the impending danger, but as he himself stated, his warnings were disregarded; if he was disappointed by indifference then, he has become distrustful of excitement since; he may therefore have looked with despondency upon the course of events, and he has in consequence [p. 51] incurred the reproach of a too selfish regard for the present hour. But the great solicitude now manifested by the Austrian government for their steam navigation in the Black Sea, and in particular, the important Commercial Treaty lately concluded, seem to

signify new intentions. England and Austria are beyond all doubt bound together by their interests of preservation, and the suggestion of a defensive coalition between them is in the spirit of the measures unsuccessfully recommended in 1829 by Prince Metternich himself.

[p. 52] I have thus, my Lord, laid before Your Excellency a statement of my ideas; but notwithstanding its length, I fear that from the magnitude of the subject it may fail in perspicuity, and I might perhaps with propriety have enlarged, where I may be supposed to be better acquainted, namely on the posture of affairs, the peculiar interests, and the present temper of Russia. Though I have considered Turkey as the subject matter of the Eastern Question, my opinions grasp no daring views; they inculcate no organic changes; the language I recommend is not hostile [p. 53] to Russia, but one of reason and truth, acknowledging her rights and pertinacious of our own; I dare indulge the hope that all interests, when calmly and justly appreciated, may be reconciled; and above all, I have to heart the welfare of England, and the preservation of the blessings of peace.

I have the honor to be etc.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests regarding this research.

ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL / PARTICIPANT CONSENT

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