

# GEORGE THE THIRD, SELIM THE THIRD AND ENGLISH ORIENTAL POLICY AFTER THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ROMANIAN CONSULATE (1803)

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*Abstract:* The papers in my hands contain a letter drawn up and signed by George The Third, at Royal Palace St. James, the Thirteenth Day of September 1789.

The letter gives information about the improvement of English trade in the Ottoman domains and talks about the Protection that Selim The Third grants to English subjects doing trade on the Ottoman domains.

*Keywords:* St. James Palace, George The Third, Selim The Third, English merchants, English trade, Ottoman domains.

## 1. THE FOUNDATION OF LEVANT COMPANY AND ENGLISH EMBASSY AT CONSTANTINOPE

England had no direct contact either diplomatic or commercial with the Byzantine Empire, and even the fall of Constantinople in 1453 passed without notice in contemporary English chronicles.

During the fifteenth century English merchants pushed their ventures towards the Mediterranean.

By 1511 diverse English ships were carrying English cloth to Crete, Cyprus and Syria in exchange for silks, oils, spices, carpets and mohair yarn. From this period onwards proofs of the existence of growing commercial links with the Levant are not lacking. The products of the orient had been conveyed along the great routes of the middle ages which all converged upon the shores of the Levant, either via the Caspian Sea to the Black

Sea, via Persia and Aleppo to the Syrian coast, or via the Red Sea to Alexandria. All the three routes had finally joined at Venice. From this great clearing house oriental commodities were distributed all over Europe.[1].

In the middle of the century Venetian trade with the Levant was diminished by the state of the eastern Mediterranean, as the loss of some territories in the Aegean. The Ottoman sea-power reached its zenith in that period, and the trade routes leading to Constantinople, Smyrna, Aleppo and Alexandria swarmed with fleets of corsairs which paid little respect to treaties. The discovery and development of the route to the east round the Cape of Good Hope by Portuguese ruined the trade of Venice in the Mediterranean, as it was proved that oriental goods could be brought to Europe cheaper, and more safely.

Even so the English traders were obliged to look elsewhere for the supplies of eastern goods, for the moment there was no desire for them to travel to the Levant to buy the oriental commodities when they could purchase the same goods from the wealthy merchants of the Netherlands. But when the Ottomans led by the Sultan Suleiman got the gates of Vienna and filled all Europe with alarm, it was impossible for England to ignore the Ottomans.

At the end of the century two of the great merchants of that time, Edward Osborne and Richard Staper took the first steps towards the foundation of the Levant Company. In the meantime it was essential to have an ambassador and consuls to govern the merchants who settled there, to secure protection from the Ottoman authorities.[2]

## **2. ENGLAND AND THE EASTERN QUESTION**

At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century the relationship of Catherine II and Joseph II became an agreement between the two sovereigns and they were solemnly promised to support each other in the Balkans and in the Black Sea.

The Porte regarded with great concern the relationship and Russia's supremacy in the Black Sea. Moreover, Russian agents extended their intrigues among the Greeks, Slavs and Romanians. As the Sultan Abdul Hamid was required to give up his sovereignty over Georgia, to surrender Bessarabia to Russia, to permit Russian governors in Moldova and Wallachia, to accept the seizure of the Crimea in time of peace, he demanded the restoration of Crimea and that was followed up the demand by a declaration of war against Russia (August, 1787).[2]

The Porte's move was attributed to the encouragement of Pitt the elder and it brought the Triple Alliance, in 1788, between England, Prussia and the United Provinces. In this Alliance, England was not concerned about Russia's advent into Europe, as England saw in Russia a possible counterpoise to the dangerous France.

The younger Pitt was the first English statesman who appreciated the real concern of England in the affairs of the Balkans and Black Sea.[3]

The younger Pitt formed the Triple Alliance to save Belgium from France, to preserve the peace of Europe, but not to further the ambitions of Prussia.

Some events disposed the belligerents to peace, as in April, 1789, Abdul Hamid I died, and was succeeded by Selim III. The death of the Emperor Joseph and the accession of his brother, Leopold gave a new turn to Austrian policy. And above all, it was the revolutionary moment in France, rousing strong interest the attention of every monarch and every government in Europe.

This was the moment when Pitt assumed a firmer position towards Catherine II, and in November 1790, he demanded that Tsarina Catherine should surrender Oczakov, and in March 1791 the Cabinet agreed to dispatch an ultimatum to Russia in that position. But the debated in both the House of lords and in the Commons, underlined the fact that public opinion was not prepared for a reversal of the traditional policy which had governed the relationship between England and Russia. Tsarina Catherine II had her own way about Oczakov, without any attack from the English fleet.[4]

In August, 1791, Austria concluded peace with the Porte and Serbia was handed back to Turkey, and there was restored the *status quo ante* war. On

January, 1792, at Jassy, a treaty was signed by Russia and the Ottoman Empire. The treaty of Küçük Kaynarca, the Convention Explicative of 1779, and the Commercial Treaty of 1783 were confirmed; Porte recovered Moldavia, but the stipulation contained in the preceding treaties were fulfilled, the Russian border was advanced to the Dniester (Oczakov being thus transferred), and the Porte agreed to recognize the annexation of the Crimea.[5]

### 3. DIPLOMATIC AND COMMERCIAL CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN GEORGE THE THIRD AND SELIM THE THIRD

In 1789, autumn King George the Third in His letter addressed to Sultan Selim the Third, stipulated in it about the protection for English merchants doing trade in the Ottoman territories.

The letter was written at St.James Palace, on the 13<sup>th</sup> of September, 1789 and it was signed by His Royal Highness George the Third. )”*George The Third by the Grace of God King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland Defender of the Faith, Duke of Brunswich and Lulenburgh, and Treasurer and Prince Elector of the Holy Roman Empire*” (see attach.)[6]

I found the letter when I was doing research with the *T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü; Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı*, Istanbul, Türkiye, The Prime Minister’s Office Ottoman Archive, Istanbul, Turkey) HR. MTV. 747/3.

The letter begins with a salutation formula written in full respect and goodwill addressed to Sultan Selim the Third by George the Third “...*King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland Defender of the Faith, Duke of Brunswich and Lulenburgh, and Treasurer*

*and Prince Elector of the Holy Roman Empire*”[6]

The letter continues the same message addressed to Sultan Selim the Third „*Most High and Mighty Prince Being desirous to maintain, without Interruption, that Friendship which has subsisted Our respective Royal Predecessors and to strengthen and improve it upon all Occasions*” [7].

The document mentions the willingness to maintain the relationships between the two Royalities and introduces John Spencer Smith Esquire, the new Ambassador, Charged Affairs and Secretary of Legation at Constantinople “*We have determined to appoint Our Trusty and Wellbeloved John Spencer Smith Esquire who has resided since the return of Our Trusty and Well-loved Robert Liston Esquire, late Our Ambassador, Charged Affairs and Secretary of Legation at Your High Porte to assume the additional Character of Our Minister Plenipotentiary, and We fully trust for the Friendship which reigns between Us, that You will kindly and graciously admit him in that Quality and that You will give him entire credit in all Things which He shall at any Time represent to You in Our Name and that Your Highness will afford him Your Favour and Countenance...*”[8]

The continues with the same kindness and wiliness addressed to Sultan Selim the Third, and it stipulates the liberty, rights and privileges agreed for English merchants and for English subjects traveling and trading in the Ottoman domains „...*whenever he shall find it necessary to make application to You, or Your Principal Minister in behalf of Our Subjects, to obtain Relief and Regards of any Grievances or Difficulties they may labour under, and present to Your Royal Hands any other Matters and Things which may lend to the Confinning*

*and advancing the strict Friendship and good Correspondence between Us and Our futher request is that Your Royal Majesty will conffine the ancient Freedoms, Liberties and Privileges which by virtue of the Capitulations made with the sublime Porte have been hetherto enjoyed by Our Merchants and Subjects, trading to and with Your Dominions...”[9]*

The letter introduces the capitulations agreed between England and the High Porte, „...that the said Capitulations may, by virtue of Your Royal Orders and Authority the same be necessary, be so fully and clearly expalined, as to prevent any complaints on Me understanding on that Head, and to remove all doubts and difficulties concerning the due Execution of them,”[10].

The closure of the letter shows the fact that the relationships between the two parts are very important for the St.James Palace, and it underlines the desire of His Royal Highness regarding the protection offered by the Porte for English subjects“....We desire likewise that You will on all occasions grant such marks of Your Royal favour and Protection to Our said Subjects as many be needful and convenient for their carring on and improving more and more Trade, from whence will arise mutual Benefits and Advantages to Our respective Countries and Dominions: and in return to these friendly Offices, We assure Your Imperial Majesty, that We will not be in anything[deteriorate document] in anything, that may tend to the advancement of the Prosperity and We have of Your Empire And so We wish Your Royal Majesty Healthy, Peace and Felicity, Given at Our Royal Palace St.James, this Thirteenth Day of September 1789”

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

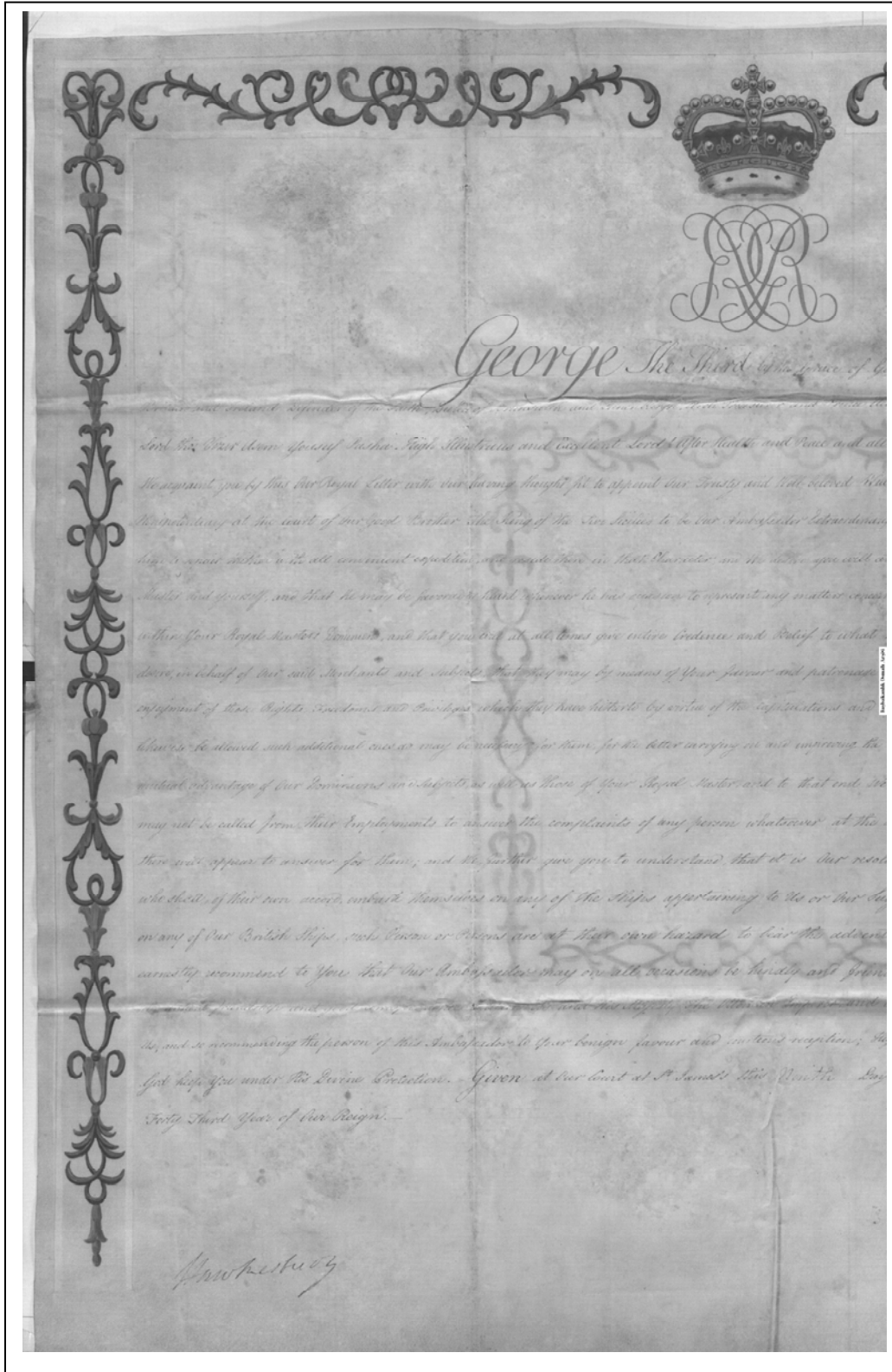
Sir John Spencer Smith was appointed the Ambassador, at Constantinople, Charged Affairs and Secretary of Legation at Levant Company.

In 1789, autumn, Sir John Spencer Smith wrote a memorandum addressed to the Porte and requested permission for English vessels to navigate into the Black Sea. The Porte allowed English merchants to do trade in the Ottoman territories, and they got a *ruhsat*, a document that allowed English merchants do trade in Ottoman and Russian ports of the Black Sea.

In 1802, England got the permission for its Merchants to trade in the Danubian ports, and for its vessels got *İzn-i sefine*, a document that allowed English vessels to enter the Black Sea.

#### References and bibliogarphy

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5. [1,2] Wood, A., *A History of the Levant Company*, Oxford University Press, 1935
6. **BOA (Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivleri, The Prime Minister’s**





The Third by the grace of God  
*King* of the United Kingdom of Great  
Britain, France and Ireland, by the Treaty of Union with Scotland, of the Kingdom of Ireland, and of the Towns of Gibraltar, in Right whereof we do hereby declare and intend  
not to suffer Hostilities and Peace and all things with respect to our Kingdoms and good correspondence being promised  
and our Trusts and full powers, William Pitt, our Secretary of State, and Ministers  
to be our Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary at the High Porte, We have accordingly commanded  
him, in the name of you will at all times proceed and wait him at home and say unto you, in our name  
to represent any matter concerning our Service, in respect of our Merchants and Subjects, in and  
his Orders and Relief to what he shall deliver and report to you in our Name, and We further  
of your favour and patronage, to which We constantly recommend them, not only be continued in the  
virtue of the Instructions and Commands made with the Porte, been proposed, but that they may  
better carrying in and improving the Trade and Commerce, which have flourished for so long a time, to the  
Royal Satisfaction, and to that end, We desire that our Merchants residing at Aleppo, Trippe and elsewhere  
any person whatsoever, at the High Porte, in case our said Ambassador or any of the Merchants  
understand, that it is our resolution never to answer for the persons, and estates of such Turks  
appertaining to Us or our Subjects, but that whosoever shall entrust his goods or persons  
hazard, to bear the adventure of those accidents to which the Sea is liable, and We  
reasons to be had, and friendly viewed, and treated at the Sublime Porte, agreeing to  
our and our heirs reception; High, Illustrious and Excellent Lord, The One Great and Omnipotent  
Allah, this Twelfth Day of February, One Thousand eight Hundred and Thrice, in the

Your affectionate Friend  
*George*