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GEORGE CANNING, RUSSIA AND THE EMANCIPATION  
OF GREECE

George Canning was undoubtedly the greatest British politician of the 19th century, a reputation only few statesmen are able to achieve, as Canning did, in their lifetime. Though his enemies, political and personal, were legion, with none other but King George IV himself among them, this man still attained to premiership. The curious and yet to be verified, correspondence of countess (later princess) D. H. Lieven, the wife of the Russian Ambassador to London, contains the following remark made by King George IV with reference to G. Canning: "He is a scoundrel and I hate him more every day". A year later this well-informed lady wrote: "Mr. Canning will go on ruling England as long as he pleases"<sup>1</sup>.

Among the ways whereby Canning asserted his influence was the old and well-tested one, like the forum of the House of Commons, and also a new one, like wooing supporters and relying on the periodical press.

The figures as diverse as Palmerston, Gladstone and Disraeli regarded themselves as Canning's pupils and disciples. They all claimed Canning's legacy as the common heritage of conservatives and Liberals alike.

The British historiography refers sometimes to the riddle of Canning—a Liberal abroad and a conservative at home<sup>2</sup>.

The recognition of Latin American independence is associated with his name. The Holy Alliance owes its dissolution largely to his efforts. And lastly, in 1823, he recognized the Greeks which rebelled against the Ottoman oppression as belligerents, and rendered them assistance later on.

In Great Britain's history Canning is known as a man of rightist views, who was in favour of leaving intact the "rotten boroughs" electoral system which was flagrantly unjust and had created a situation in which the then foremost industrial country in the world was ruled, in fact, by the large landed aristocracy. As a leading minister in Earl Liverpool's cabinet, Canning actively resisted the idea of the electoral reform.

However the intensification of the Tory foreign policy could be accounted

1. *The Private Letters of Princess Lieven to Prince Metternich, 1820-1826*, L., 1948, pp. 269, 299.

2. Ch. Petrie, *George Canning*, L., 1946, p. 227.

for precisely by the desire to preserve the positions of the large landed aristocracy in the face of the pressures brought to bear by the liberal industrial bourgeoisie: the conquest or opening up of new markets was calculated to calm the discontent of the industrialists and to diminish the movement for the parliamentary reform. In the Soviet historiography, this circumstance which is of cardinal importance was pointed out by Academician E. V. Tarle<sup>3</sup>. "There is no such thing as the riddle of Canning: he was a most talented and skilful champion of this course. In the twenties, the inability of the Spanish Monarchy, enfeebled by the revolution, to keep her overseas possessions in subjugation any longer came fully to light. The colossal Spanish-American empire was coming to pieces". And here the British "presence" in the far continent suddenly became obvious. Sweeping aside the protests from the reactionary continental monarchies and their proposals to convene a congress to discuss the destinies of Latin America, Canning took steps towards the recognition of the state independence of the former Spanish possessions.

It should be noted that a historian might be tempted to equate Canning's policies vis-a-vis the Spanish and Ottoman empires because of the almost simultaneous emancipation of Latin America and Greece. This can hardly be warranted, in our view. The positions of Great Britain vis-a-vis Latin America and the Balkans exhibited certain differences, and, as such, they need to be taken into account. The British foreign policy rested at that time on the principle of equilibrium, of the balance of forces in Europe, and the South-Eastern part of the continent fully came within its compass. Turkey provided in this area a counterbalance to Russian claims. She was an old client of the British Empire and a convenient custodian of the Straits. Commercially, the possibilities of the Ottoman dominions as a market for goods from the Albion were yet far from being exhausted. It was precisely the second half of the 20's that witnessed the onset of a long upward climb of the British exports in this region: in the 1826-1852 period it registered an eightfold increase (while imports—only twofold), the favourable trade balance reached 6.2 million pound sterling<sup>4</sup>. The relatively small Greek market sustained no comparison with the vastness of the Ottoman one, with its low customs duties. As for the Greek carrying trade, the rule of the waves had no need for it.

Therefore, Great Britain was interested not only politically but also com-

3. *Istoria Diplomatii* (History of Diplomacy), v. 1, 2nd edition, Moscow, Political Publishers, 1959, p. 534.

4. F. E. Bailey, *British Policy and the Turkish Reform Movement*, Cambridge (U.S.A.), 1942, p. 74.

mercially in preserving the integrity of the Ottoman dominions and keeping them intact.

The three appearances of the Russian fleet in the Mediterranean which was regarded something like huge British lake (expeditions of Spiridov in 1769-1774, Ushakov—in 1798-1800, and Senyavin—in 1805-1807), and their victorious military operations against the Turks and the French had the effect of an alarm signal upon the British.

The Sultanate regime which had been growing weaker in the course of several generations previously and altogether powerless to intrude upon the possessions of the British Crown and the routes to them was now looked upon by the British as an ideal custodian of the Straits. Hence, the conclusion that it was necessary to prolong its existence, and the transition to supporting it. This manifested itself most obviously in the policy of younger Pitt's cabinet'; under the treaty with the Ottoman Empire concluded in 1799, Great Britain undertook to guarantee the integrity of the latter's dominions for an eight-year term. Later, Turkey became a Napoleon Bonaparte's ally and found itself at war with Great Britain. But even in those conditions it was none other but George Canning who formulated during his first tenure of the Foreign Office (1807-1809) the policy of integrity of the Ottoman empire<sup>5</sup>—so firmly had the foreign policy been decided upon in this respect.

No wonder that the news of the Greek revolution in 1821 was received by London's ruling circles as a great disaster. The balance of forces in Europe on which the British foreign policy rested was thus threatened to be upset. "Abroad we have no subject of interest—wrote permanent undersecretary for foreign affairs Joseph Planta on August 8, 1821,—but the Greeks, the Turks and the Russians and the war which everybody fears between Russia and the Porte"<sup>6</sup>. What strikes one in this remark is that the two questions—the Greek rebellion and the Russo-Turkish relations—are linked together.

London feared complications in the Balkans more than anywhere else in Europe. The specific feature of the situation consisted there in the fact that the Russian policy encouraged the development of the national liberation movement which was her ally in the confrontation against the Ottoman power. Interested in gaining access to the Black sea, undermining the Turkish power and enlarging its influence in South-East Europe, Russia insistently worked, in years of peace diplomatically, and also in the course of the Russo-Turkish

5. H. Temperley, *England and the Near East. The Crimea*, L.-N.Y.—Toronto, 1936, p. 47.

6. C. K. Webster, *The foreign policy of Castlereagh*, L., 1925, p. 583.

wars, and, on the whole, successfully, for securing greater rights for the oppressed South Slavs, Greeks, Moldavians and Wallachians. The treaty of Kuchuk Kainarji (1774), of Yassy (1791), of Bucharest (1812) are not only part of Russian history but also important landmarks in the life of Romania, Yugoslavia and Greece. Broad strata of the Russian population, including the high one, were sympathetic to the movement of the peoples in the Balkans. It should also be pointed out that the purely mundane interests of the Russian landlords and merchants were presented by the conservative ideologists in the garb of the age-long struggle of the Orthodoxy against Mohammedanism.

Apart from those factors of lasting importance, which can be considered as the constants of the Russian policy in South-East Europe, there were also others which operated in the epoch of the Napoleonic wars and thereafter. As a bulwark of the European reaction, Tsarism pursued the policy of legitimism; this found its most eloquent expression in the conclusion of the Holy Alliance—a union of monarchs against peoples. When in March 1821 Alexander I who was then in Laibach (Ljubljana) at the Alliance's congress learned that, general-major of the Russian Army, Prince Alexander Ipsilantis was at the head of an anti-Turkish rebellion, he did not conceal his embarrassment and hastened to condemn it "for it is not like me to undermine the pillars of the Turkish Empire through a shameful and criminal action of a secret society"<sup>7</sup>. The flower of the European reaction which gathered in Laibach applauded the autocrat who thus departed from the traditional Russian policy in the Balkans. The standard-bearer of this reaction, the Austrian Chancellor Metternich, exulted over it: "We are guiding Emperor Alexander..."<sup>8</sup>.

The wording itself: "We are guiding..." is significant enough. It reflected the fact that Russia was departing from the foundations of her course in South-East Europe. This was clearly understood in Vienna and in London, but not without misgivings, however, for they realized that the position to which the influential Russian circles adhered to was different and the departure might thus be only short-lived. How difficult it would be to impress on the Russian dignitaries the suggestion they should discontinue their support to the South Slavs and Greek was well understood, for example, by the then British Foreign Secretary R. Castlereagh, to whom the following utterance belongs: "Although the Emperor's known attachment to his allies and his Imperial Majesty's undisguised wish for the preservation of peace are circumstances

7. G. L. Arsh, *I. Kapodistriya i grecheskoye natsionalno-osvoboditelnoye dvizhenie* (John Capodistrias and the Greek national liberation movement), Moscow, the Nauka Publishers, 1976, p. 309.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 221.

well calculated to inspire confidence in his Imperial Majesty's personal views... there exists a powerful party in Russia with very different views, having great sway within the Council of the State itself and widely spread throughout both the Church and the Army"<sup>9</sup>.

Castlereagh launched a correspondence with Metternich on this subject and then met the Austrian Chancellor in Hanover. Relying on the reactionary outlook of the Russian autocrat and the religious-mystical vein in his thinking, they elaborated a scheme of influencing the Tsar and his entourage for the purpose of securing his refusal to support the Greeks. On July 1821, Castlereagh sent a letter of instruction to the British Ambassador in St. Petersburg, which said the following about the Greek rebels: "They form a branch of that organised spirit of insurrection which is systematically propagating itself throughout Europe and which explodes wherever the hand of the Governing Power from whatever cause is enfeebled. If its symptoms are more destructive in Turkey, it is because, in that unhappy country, it finds all those passions and prejudices, and above all, those religious animosities, which give the civil commotions their most odious and afflicting colours"<sup>10</sup>.

The "worst misgivings" of Castlereagh and Metternich came true. The wave of sympathy for the Greek cause swept the whole of Russia. The idea of rendering them military assistance was supported by the revolutionary noblemen-future Decembrists, the nascent "raznochinets" intelligentsia, many men of letters who were led by the ruler of the minds of the generation—the young Pushkin—, and even some highly-placed dignitaries from the Tsar's entourage. Among them, were the then Russian foreign secretary, a native of Corfu Joanness Capodistrias and the Russian Ambassador in Constantinople G. A. Stroganov. The circles, influential in the state, deemed it necessary that the policy of "protecting" the Christian peoples of the Balkans should be continued. Thus, on his return to Russia, the Tsar found himself in an entirely different psychological climate. Neither there was any progress in solving the old contradictions with Turkey while the introduction by the latter of her troops into the Danubian principalities where they suppressed the detachments under the command of Ypsilantis and the Walachian insurgents led by Tudor Vladimiresku, caused a deep concern in St. Petersburg. In the middle of June Stroganov was instructed to demand in an ultimatum form that the Ottoman army be withdrawn from Wallachia and Moldavia, the freedom of navigation through the Straits—reinstated, and the persecution of the Chris-

9. C. K. Webster, *op. cit.*, p. 394.

10. C. K. Webster, *op. cit.*, pp. 360-361.

tian population not implicated in the rebellion-ended. The note ended on a threatening note: in case of refusal the Porte" would place itself into openly hostile relations vis-a-vis the entire Christian world, legitimate the protection of Greek and Russia would have to extend them her patronage<sup>11</sup>. Since the positive answer did not come, Stroganov and his entire mission left the Turkish capital. At the same time, the Tsar addressed all European Courts, seeking their support. The purpose of his appeal was to receive "from Europe" a mandate for a war against Turkey<sup>12</sup>.

But Alexander I was begging the question, when he threatened the Porte with the animosity of "the entire Christian world". All European capitals received the Tsar's appeal coldly, while in London—even icily. Rather than supporting Russia, their diplomacy expressed its unequivocal support for the Sultan. In September 1821, the Ambassadors of Great Britain, Austria, France, and Prussia in Constantinople addressed the Greeks with a message in which they accused them of rebelling against their legitimate monarch, which in their words was reprehensible in terms of both the morale of the Holy Gospel and the principles of pure politics<sup>13</sup>.

But such realities as the almost open threat of resistance on the part of the allies, the difficult financial situation of Russia, the unpreparedness of the Russian Army for another difficult campaign, the yet bleeding wounds of the 1812 war, and the differences among the ruling circles—all made their impression upon the Tsar, and he decided to abstain from a war. During the four years that followed and until the death of Alexander I the Russian diplomacy continued to make unsuccessful attempts to attract the "European concert" to its side, to end the bloodshed in the Balkans, and to support the rebellious Greeks.

On August 8, 1822, Robert Castlereagh committed suicide, and was succeeded by George Canning. Naturally, the change of leadership did not affect in the least the cardinal factors determining the British policy and prompting her to regard the preservation of the Ottoman empire as the cornerstone of her course in the Near East and South-East Europe. Three years after assuming his post (in September 1825) Canning told the representatives of the Greek insurgents that their "sanguine and enthusiastic friends" (i.e. philhellenes) were mistaken in suggesting that Great Britain was able to easily

11. G. L. Arch, *op. cit.*, p. 228.

12. I. S. Dostyan, *Rossiay i Balkansky vopros* (Russia and the Balkan question), Moscow, Nauka Publishers, 1972, pp. 204-205.

13. I. S. Nicholas, "Hellas scorned: the Affair of the Ambassadorial Address to the Greeks 1821", *East European Quarterly*, 1975, No. 3.

end the conflict in the Balkans by interfering in it, because the "easiness is imaginary": "They forget that there existed between England and Turkey treaties of very ancient date and of uninterrupted obligations which the Turks faithfully observed, and to the protection of which British interests of a vast amount were and are confided within the dominions of Turkey; all these interests must at once be put in jeopardy and the obligation of the treaties which protect them, be at once advisedly broken by the first blow which Great Britain should strike, as the ally of Greece, in hostility with Turkey"<sup>14</sup>.

There existed, however, three factors which were beyond the control of Castlereagh or Canning: the determination of the Greeks to gain independence; the sympathy for Greek cause on the part of the Russian public, which influenced the Russian ruling circles who, in their turn, sought to consolidate their positions in the Balkans; and the philhellenic movement in Europe, including Great Britain.

The sense of the reality told Canning that it was useless to cling to what had outlived itself and to resist the new and gaining in strength. Besides, in contrast to his predecessor, he did not consider the Greek insurgents a Balkan variety of carbonarists and thought he could get on well with their leaders. He tried, therefore, to adopt his policy to the new phenomena and make the latter benefit Great Britain to the extent possible.

The embryos of this course can be traced already in the Castlereagh's actions.

On the writing desk of his predecessor Canning found instructions written by Castlereagh for the British delegate at the Conference of Verona (October-December, 1822). The contained a cautious but still a definite statement of the need to give recognition to the changes then in progress in the Balkans: "The progress made by the Greeks towards the formation of a Government which may compel us, if a *de facto* Government shall actually be established in the Morea and Western Province of Turkey, to acknowledge the rights of the Greeks as belligerents..."<sup>15</sup>. Canning adopted without the alteration of a word the instructions drafted by Castlereagh.

Meanwhile, the Greek-Turkish hostilities spread to the East Mediterranean. The Greeks possessed a considerable fleet and announced a blockade of the shores of the Balkan peninsula.

On March 25, 1823, Canning surprised the European Courts by recognizing the Greeks as belligerents. He appraised his own decision as a pragmatic

14. See: *The Hausard's Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd Ser., vol. 234, p. 747-748.

15. J. A. R. Marriot, *Castlereagh*, London, 1936, p. 826.

act in the name of commerce: "The Turks could not protect British commerce and so we must treat the Greeks either as pirates, either as belligerents". The former was, obviously, unacceptable, and Canning wrote that since the Greeks had gained "a certain degree of force and stability"<sup>16</sup>, granting them belligerent right was more preferable.

Far from being inclined to belittle the services of the British Minister, the authors of the "Cambridge History of the British Foreign Policy" appraise his decision as was "no more or less than a protective commercial measure"<sup>17</sup>.

In fact, this was a real help for the insurgents and a heavy blow to the principles of the Holy Alliance. "We pass in Europe for a Jacobin club"<sup>18</sup>—bitterly remarked Duke Wellington in this connection. Such accusations did not embarrass Canning in the least. The British diplomacy, and this was its strong point, bowed to the inevitable and even managed to extract from it a no small benefit. Compared to Castlereagh, Canning was more farsighted a politician, one of an immeasurably higher calibre, and not bound by the "diplomacy of congresses" tradition, he showed more resolution and, when necessary, was more stern in his actions. However, as far as the Greek question is concerned, we cannot discern any qualitative gap between the actions of Castlereagh and his successor. "There was no such breach between the policies of Castlereagh and Canning as is sometimes alleged...The difference was on pace rather than in direction"<sup>19</sup>. This appraisal by Ch. Petrie is, not unfounded in our view.

In the meantime, Canning was taking advantage of the passivity on the part of the Russian diplomacy. Forsaken by St. Petersburg, the Greeks turned to Great Britain for support. J. Orlandos and A. Luriotis, delegates of the Provisional Greek Government, arrived in London for obtaining a loan amounting to a no small sum of 800,000 pound sterling. Despite the high risks involved in floating the loan the banking firm of Longham O'Brian & Co<sup>0</sup>, undertook to back it. Reluctant to compromise himself in the eyes of the Ottoman authorities, Canning declined to meet the delegates but requested information on the situation in Greece<sup>20</sup>.

Naturally, the news of the loan found a positive response in Greece. The

16. H. Temperley, *The Foreign Policy of Canning*, L., 1925, p. 326.

17. *The Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy*, vol. 2, Cambridge, 1923, p. 81.

18. Ch. Petrie, *op. cit.*, p. 213.

19. Ch. Petrie, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

20. H. A. Lieven to K. V. Nesselrode, dated January 21 (February 11), 1824; April 11 (23), 1824—the Archive of the Foreign Policy of Russia; the "Office" collection; document 6931, sheet 241; document 6932, sheet 57.

poet Byron who was a legendary figure already in his lifetime was hailed rapturously by the insurgents on his arrival in Greece. The British prestige in the Balkans was rising.

This process exhibits, however, a certain peculiarity which should not be let out of sight: Great Britain's influence was growing not on the basis of any positive programme of support for the Greek revolution, but taking advantage on the mistakes of the Russian policy. This gave rise to a situation that was rather rare in diplomatic practice. Following the rupture of diplomatic relations between Turkey and Russia, direct contacts between them did not exist, and the duties of the agent for Russian affairs were assumed, in response to the request from the Alexander I, first in fact and then formally, by the British Ambassador in Constantinople Lord Strangford, who harboured anti-Russian and pro-Turkish sentiment and was an author of the ill-fated Ambassadorial Address to the Greeks 1821. According to his own words, he was entrusted with the "innermost and loftiest thoughts"<sup>21</sup> the Russian Emperor entertained on the question of settling the conflict between Russia and the Ottoman Empire. Strangford interpreted those thoughts naturally, in accordance with the imperatives the British political pattern.

London feared a possible outbreak of a Russo-Turkish war or, more accurately, a growing of the tsarist influence in the Balkans which might result from a defeat of the Ottoman Empire. To make the situation less tense and restore the relations between the two countries, Strangford tried (without any appreciable success) to secure the withdrawal of the Turkish troops from the Wallachian and Moldavian principalities<sup>22</sup> and the removal of the barriers to the Black Sea trade. In doing so, he considered the Russian claims as being not grounded enough (of which he reported to Canning) and, therefore, in talking to the Turkish dignitaries he omitted to emphasize their justice<sup>23</sup>! As for the Greek question for which the Russian public was so concerned, Strangford bypassed it in his negotiations in Constantinople, and explained to his correspondents in St. Petersburg that the instructions he had received did not contain any proposals with regard to Greece; the degree to which the powers were inclined to discuss them was not known to him, while he regarded the Greeks as participants of the universal upheaval against which, as he wrote,

21. A copy of a despatch from Strangford to Nesselrode, 28 February 1823, the Archive of the Foreign Policy of Russia, the "Office" collection, 1823, document 6922, sheet 117.

22. In 1821, the Turkish troops suppressed in Wallachia the greek insurrection led by Al. Ypsilantis and the rebellion led by T. Vladimirescu.

23. H. A. Lieven to K. V. Nesselrode, November 18 (30), 1823, The Archive of the Foreign Policy of Russia, the "Office" collection, document 6921, sheets 235-237.

the moral forces of the great European alliance used all the means of protection at their disposal. As for the Turkish government, it deserved, in the eyes of the noble Lord, every praise: he wrote that wherever the ravages of the rebellion have not touched the land, the Church enjoyed respect and protection, the distinction was made between the guilty and non-guilty, the public tranquility set in instead of disorder, and the confidence was restored along with security. Through the prism of the British Ambassador's pro-Turkish sentiment, the Russian claims looked like "importunities", and Strangford wrote to St. Petersburg: "En un mot, j'ai du me charger de la responsabilité de ne pas présenter la pacification de la Grèce comme condition sine qua non du rétablissement des relations diplomatique entre la Russie et la Porte"<sup>24</sup>.

All this was written on the second year after George Canning succeeded to the management of the British foreign affairs. The negotiations conducted by Strangford continued to mark time...It was evident that the Ambassador was in no hurry to come to the aid of Greeks...

In an effort to find a way out of the impasse Alexander I and K. V. Nesselrode wrote in January 1824 an unsuccessful "Memorandum on the Pacification of Greece"<sup>25</sup>, urging the division of the country into three autonomous vassal principalities, and trying to give a new lease of life to the "diplomacy of congresses". With that in view, they convened in June a conference of ambassadors in St. Petersburg.

After a long delay, Canning made it known that Great Britain would refuse to cooperate in military actions for the sake of "pacification" of Greece and even to adopt coercive measures against the Porte<sup>26</sup>.

But a "leak" of information which was very opportune for London occurred at that time. The French and British newspapers reported to the reading public the contents of the January 1824 memorandum of the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs providing for partition of the Greek lands. The Greeks were outraged and lodged a protest in London, The "note from the North" was called by them as "unjust and ruthless".

Having drawn an eloquent picture of their struggle, the Greek government concluded the protest by the following significant words: "Can it be

24. Lord Strangford to K. V. Nesselrode, October 22, 1823. The Archive of the Foreign Policy of Russia. The "Office" collection, 1823, document 6922, sheets 252-255.

25. *Memoire de Cabinet de la Russie sur la pacification de la Grèce*. See also I. S. Dostyan, *Rossiia i Balkanskii vopros* (Russia and the Balkan question), Moscow, Nauka Publishers, 1972, pp. 232-233.

26. H. A. Lieven to K. V. Nesselrode, April 21 (May 3), 1824. The Archive of the Foreign Policy of Russia. The "Office" collection, 1824, document 6932, sheet 103.

doubted today that the Greeks are worthy of independence"<sup>27</sup>.

The indignation of the Greeks and the displeasure of Turkey helped Canning to refuse to participate in the St. Petersburg conference. Canning declared that an intervention in the conflict would be untimely and senseless<sup>28</sup>.

St. Petersburg was so irritated by the two-year procrastination in the talks with Great Britain that the Russian diplomacy discontinued all relations with it apropos the Greek topics.

Such was the backdrop against which the events that related to the Great Britain-Russia-Greece problem were unfolding in the period from August 1822 till the end of 1824. In our view, they do not provide any ground for conclusion that Canning sharply turned the rudder of the British policy on the Greek question immediately following his assumption of the tenure of the Foreign Office. At that time the recognition of the Greeks as belligerents was only a pragmatic step. Rather than venture into new initiatives, Canning preferred to maintain good relations with the Porte; but procrastination of the negotiations played into the latter's hands, for it thus gave her the possibility to suppress the Greek uprising unimpeded.

The manoeuvrings in London took place against the backdrop of the constantly worsening position of the freedom-loving Hellas, especially after Sultan Makhmud II summoned to his aid the assistance of a most powerful of his vassals Mehmet Ali, viceroy of Egypt, and the latter responded by sending to the Balkan peninsula two well armed divisions (trained by French instructors) under the command of Ibrahim.

After five years of a heavy war the idea of seeking the protection of some of other power began gaining ground in Greece. The passivity shown by Alexander I gave Great Britain the most chances in this respect. In Autumn 1825 London received via the Lord High Commissioner of the Ionian Islands an appeal to take Greece under British Protection.

However, the Greek appeal did not suit the intentions of the British Government. The political observers reported from Constantinople that the demarch of the "muteneers" caused consternation among the members of the Divan. The Foreign Office was not going to lose the results of many years of activities aimed at consolidating its influence in the vast Ottoman Empire, it considered that it was unnecessary and dangerous to enter into a conflict,

27. Letter of the General Secretary of the Provisional Greek Government to G. Canning, August 12, 1824. The Archive of the Foreign Policy of Russia, document, 6933, sheets 319-320.

28. G. Canning to Lieven, November 8, 1824. The Archive of the Foreign Policy of Russia. The "Office" collection, 1824, document 6933, sheets 307-308.

and did not want to ensure this way a new status of Greece. On September 29, 1825 the conference between Canning and the Greek plenipotentiaries Luriotis and Orlandos took place. The tone in which it was conducted was that of an instruction the sophisticated statesman was giving to his naive interlocutors<sup>29</sup>. The Minister dispelled the hopes of the Greeks that Great Britain would be able to resolve the conflict in the Balkans in their favour. On the contrary, the Minister pointed out that in reality the British intervention might result only in broadening the conflict.

In order to diminish the discontent in the Porte, and to preserve her as an old political and a most profitable trade partner, there was hurriedly published the King's declaration of neutrality in which the demarche of the Greeks was left without mention altogether<sup>30</sup>. However, the British cabinet was concerned with the reaction to the Greek demands not only in Constantinople but in other capitals, too. Canning told the Russian Ambassador in London H. A. Lieven that the British Government feared that its reply to the Greeks might push them towards another power. In the course of the conference Orlandos and Luriotis asked cautiously what the position of Great Britain might have been if the protectorate request were addressed to France. The reply was unequivocal: the general European situation would become more complicated and the Greek cause would be lost. In response to the attempt of his interlocutors to find out what might happen if they would apply to a "third country" (probably, Russia for there was no one else to turn to) Canning reacted in the same vein<sup>31</sup>.

In conclusion, Canning expressed the view that the Greeks should find ways to come to terms with the Porte. Luriotis and Orlandos replied that it was not possible. Greece had decided to either become independent or perish. Then,—replied Canning—the Greeks had only themselves to rely upon.

But it was not like Canning to cut off all the ways to achieving an agreement with the Greeks. He, no doubt, made his own conclusions regarding the Greek desperation to win their independence. "...To suppose that Greece can ever be brought back to what she was in relation to the Porte was vain" he instructed some time later his cousin Charles Stratford-Canning sent to

29. See: *The Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd Ser., vol. 234, p. 747-748.

30. *The London Gazette*, 4.X.1825.

31. H. A. Lieven to K. V. Nesselrode 18 (30).X.1825—The Archive of the Foreign Policy of Russia, the "Office" collection, 1825, doc. 6941, sheet 82-86. When reading the protocol of his talk with the Greek delegates Canning, however, preferred only to retell the passage which concerned Russia.

Constantinople on mission<sup>32</sup>. A second loan was granted to the Greeks—this time in the amount of 2 million pound sterling. London pressed the Greeks in one direction only—towards seeking a compromise with Turkey, in which case Great Britain would be a sole mediator. At one time, Canning believed that the Eastern affairs could be solved without Russia.

Canning placed special hopes on the mission of Charles Stratford. On the way to his new post the latter paid a visit to Johannes Capodistrias who was undergoing medical treatment in Geneva and was living there in the private capacity. It was “avec peine” that the British diplomat expressed his view that “la Grèce n’est pas encore formée à l’existence d’un peuple libre et indépendant et que ce n’est que par une bonne éducation qu’elle peut s’élever à cette dignité”. According to Stratford she was to go through a special school “en se plaçant, de même que les Iles Ioniennes, sous la protection exclusive de la Grande Bretagne”<sup>33</sup>. A native of this archipelago and old opponent of the British domination there<sup>34</sup> I. Capodistrias said in reply: “La Grèce était en droit d’espérer plus et mieux que l’existence coloniale à laquelle sont condamnées les Iles Ioniennes”<sup>35</sup>. As for the British policy, “...Vingt cinq ans d’observation ne laissent voir que deux choses, la crainte de la Russie, et l’établissement de votre Domination dans le Levant”—said Capodistrias...

Stratford did not hurry in his travels. Near the shores of the Hydra Island he met Mavrocordatos, Tricupis and one more representative of the Greek government. The Greeks pointed out that independence was their condition for pacification. Stratford however interrupted them and said that he was unable to lay such a proposal before the Porte<sup>36</sup>. Their response to this was encouraging, and Stratford came to the conclusion that, as he wrote, the continued struggle and exhaustion had brought Greeks to a more rational and treatable state of mind.

For his talks in the Turkish capital Stratford was given an instruction which can be considered a masterpiece of Canning’s diplomatic skill. The Ambassador was to remind the Porte the extent of the difficulties London

32. An instruction dated October 12, 1825.—*The Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy*, vol. 2, p. 89.

33. Appendix to the letter from I. A. Capodistrias to K. V. Nesselrode, December 1(13), 1825. C. W. Crawley, *John Capodistrias Unpublished Letters*, Thessaloniki, 1970, p. 72.

34. I. Capodistrias’ correspondence apropos the position of the Ionian Islands, The Central State Archive of the Ancient Acts, collection 15, sheets 336, 337.

35. C. W. Crawley, *op. cit.*, pp. 72, 73.

36. See about the meeting near the Hydra Island D. Dakon, *The Greek Struggle for Independence*, Berkeley & Los Angeles, 1973, p. 178, also C. R. Crawley, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

had to cope with and “with what compulsive and laborious perseverance the Russian Government and nation...had been kept quiet and prevented from crying for war...on behalf of a Nation professing the same religion with themselves<sup>37</sup>. No country in Europe, whatever her misgivings with regard to the plans of St. Petersburg, would take the side of Turkey in a war. Great Britain would continue applying maximum of effort in encouraging the patience of the Russian Court and censuring the “warlike propensities” of the public. But the sympathies in Europe for the Greek cause would grow with every Turkish victory, while failures of the Ottoman Empire, if such should happen, might give rise to a temptation to regard her as an easy prey.

The Ambassador was to present those considerations to the Divan in order to push it towards peace. It was also to be stressed that Great Britain was not imposing her services on anyone. However, as far as the Greek-Turkish relations were concerned, she was free from any obligation whatsoever though the British cabinet would be only happy to consider any request for mediation should it be forthcoming. But as to how long this propitious situation might last Canning had no idea. Reis Effendi could openly confide in Stratford without any fear that the contents of the talk might leak out of the Foreign Office.

But here unexpected difficulties arose. The Turkish dignitaries did indeed “confide” in the British diplomat. Carried away by the Turkish successes on the battlefield they assailed him with reproaches and accusations that he wanted to interpose himself between the rebels and their lawful monarch. Reis Effendi rejected out of hand any interference in the internal affairs of the Empire “qui par la grace du très hauts est libre et independant”<sup>38</sup>.

Thus the illusions that the question might be decided by the three powers—Great Britain, Turkey and Greece—with Russia taking no part in the settlement of the Greek affairs went up in smoke, though, on the other hand, to continue to sit idle was also no longer possible. As Ibrahim pasha was devastating Greece with sword and fire, the indignation among the wide masses of European population, including the British public, was mounting.

The “real danger”<sup>39</sup> to the British plans coming from Russia increased. It became evident to Canning that nothing short of a military conflict might

37. A. G. Stapleton, *The Political Life of George Canning*, London, 1831, vol. 2, p. 459.

38. From the despatch of Ch. Stratford, dated April 19, 1826. The Archive of the Foreign Policy of Russia, 1826, document 6958, sheets 387, 389.

39. *The Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy*, vol. 2, p. 87.

satisfy Russia: Alexander I “in a state of gloomy abstraction...had resolved on immediate war”<sup>40</sup>.

This called for restoration of contacts with her in order not to lose time and try to constrain her actions in the course of a “friendly” dialogue. Canning began to frequent the saloon of the wife of the Russian Ambassador D. H. Lieven...The year 1825 was drawing to a close.

Canning’s presentiment and experience could not deceive him. The patience of the Russian ruling circles was, indeed, wearing out.

The most perspicacious of the British politicians realized that the former methods whereby Russia’s actions were delayed could no longer be successful; a change of tactics was needed, in order to prevent the inexorable Russian actions from assuming a unilateral nature. As conceived in London, the cooperation with Russia had the objective of binding her, helping her to establish her control over the processes taking place in the Balkans and, objectively, to slow down their progress by finding an agreement formula acceptable to the Ottoman ruling circles.

The British Minister acted in accordance with the following line of reasoning. A war between Russia and the Porte should be prevented because of the prospect of the latter’s defeat. It was senseless, however, he wrote to Duke Wellington “by general recommendations cultivate peace and tranquility”. One should try to instill in the Russians a hope that their objectives would be achieved without resorting to the means whose application might involve heavy sacrifices. The Turks realize that “the patience of the late Emperor of Russia had been at length wearied out”. Therefore concessions in settling their disputes with Russia could well be expected. Attempts to keep her from interfering in the Greek affairs had no chances of success; St. Petersburg dignitaries had, for some time now, been speaking “in terms of bitterness and contempt for the delusive and worn out policy of Austria”. Therefore, it was necessary at this stage to “avoid the fruitless and perplexing process of a conference”<sup>41</sup>.

The conferences between Canning and Lieven started in deep secrecy<sup>42</sup>.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 90.

41. The quotations are taken from the instructions to Duke Wellington, signed February 10, 1826. A. G. Stapleton, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, pp. 465-476.

42. A letter from Lieven, dated December 4(16), 1825. The Archive of the Foreign Policy of Russia, the “Office” collection, document 6941, sheets 244-253. The reports sent by Lieven represent a valuable source on the prehistory of the Russo-British Agreement of April 4, 1826, because Canning “kept his colleagues in complete ignorance”.—D. Dakin, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

The British Minister requested not to let other powers learn about them. Prussia, in his words, did not have any influence in the East. Austria took a position entirely hostile to the Greeks, and thus might upset all plans. The French cabinet was characterized by him as inconstant and versatile. The explanation for such an indignant appraisal can be sought, perhaps, in the fact that France was looking for ways of establishing its own influence in Greece relying, among others, on the French philhellenes.

Canning's initiative was immediately taken up. "Great Britain is coming to meet us"—wrote Lieven. The rapprochement with this powerful nation brought Russia out of the state of isolation in the foreign policy field and put Austria into this unpleasant situation; and since the latter could not even entertain a thought about supporting the Ottoman empire by military means single-handedly, impotence was becoming her lot.

St. Petersburg's possibilities for manoeuvring on the world arena were growing. While London was pursuing the objective of limiting the scale and objectives of a possible Russian intervention into the Balkan affairs, the northern capital sought to involve the new ally as deeply as possible in undermining the Ottoman power.

The desire for a rapprochement with Great Britain became fully obvious during the official visit of Duke Wellington to St. Petersburg in spring 1826 for the purpose of extending congratulations to the new Emperor Nicholas I on the occasion of his ascension to the throne. One could hardly think of a more suitable person to please the young Tsar. The hero of Waterloo had the rank of the Russian fieldmarshal. Nicholas showed a lively interest in his military accomplishments.

But even the most passionate admirers of Wellington did not perceive any diplomatic talents in him. All throughout his life he devoutly adhered to the principles of the British Toryism of the beginning of the 19th century. According to them, the Ottoman Empire was an integral component of the balance of forces in Europe and the most suitable custodian of the British sea routes. Any social, let alone revolutionary experiments, which might upset this balance could be only detrimental.

The northern capital accorded Wellington a reception that, for its courtesy and magnificence, was really unexcelled. But the preparations which had been made in St. Petersburg for the arrival of this guest were thorough, indeed, not only in terms of the protocol. St. Petersburg was going to take advantage of the British cabinet's desire to achieve a settlement with regard to Greece in such a way as to be able to secure its support also on other ques-

tions<sup>43</sup>, except the Russian conflict with Turkey, and, at the same time, not to grant Great Britain the rights and possibilities in connection with her mediation. According to Nesselrode, a courier was ready to deliver an ultimatum to the Porte with a demand to open negotiations on a broad range of questions relating to the Russo-Turkish relations and the situation of the Balkan peoples, the Greeks excluding.

The thoroughness with which the "iron Duke" studied the draft of this document can be judged by the several memoranda he sent Nesselrode<sup>44</sup>, who latter recalled the "active and enlightened participation" of the British fieldmarshal in "discussing this demarche", whose remarks were adopted almost entirely<sup>45</sup>. Wellington acknowledged the justice of the Russian demands though tried (unsuccessfully) to delay sending the despatch. After he failed in this effort, the extraordinary British Ambassador did not find it suitable, however, to interrupt his mission for fear, according to Nesselrode, that the war might break out et "quoique la Russie est gardée le silence sur la pacification de la Grèce, elle n'en aurait pas moins l'occasion facile et le moyen assuré d'y rétablir la paix uniquement au gré de ses convenances particulières"<sup>46</sup>. Herein lies the key to understanding the position of the British envoy. The Duke promised that the British Embassy in Constantinople would accord its support for achieving the objectives of the ultimatum<sup>47</sup>. He sent a letter to Stratford, which contained the following paragraph: "Une guerre avec la Russie dans le moment actuelle donnerait sans contradict de nouveaux encouragements aux grecs et mettrait meme dans un état de rébellion la presque totalité des sujets Europeens de la Porte", while satisfaction of "the just demands of Russia" should improve the relations between the two countries<sup>48</sup>.

St. Petersburg began to reap the fruits of its rapprochement with Great Britain almost immediately. Guided by the motives similar to those entertained

43. Settlement of the boundary line in the Transcaucasus, the withdrawal of the Turkish troops from the Danubian principalities, settlement of the Serbian-Ottoman conflict, and ending the discrimination against the Russian trade.

44. Dated February 27 (March 11), March 1(13), March 2(14), March 18, (New style), 1826. The Archive of the Foreign Policy of the USSR. The "Office" collection, document 1455 sheets 169-172, 162-165, 158, 161.

45. A private letter of K. V. Nesselrode to A. Wellington, May 27 (June 9), 1826. *Ibid.*, documents 4456, sheet 14.

46. A report by K. V. Nesselrode about the talks—*A collection of treaties and conventions concluded by Russia with foreign powers*, V. XI, St. Petersburg, 1895, p. 340.

47. A. G. Stapleton, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 486.

48. A. Wellington to Ch. Stratford.

by Wellington in the course of his mission, and, namely, fear of Russia deciding to enter immediately into a military conflict with the Porte, the governments of Great Britain, Austria and France brought a simultaneous pressure to bear on the Sultan in an effort to induce him to accept the Russian demands<sup>49</sup>. Metternich who showed a special zeal believed that the Russian "intervention" into the Greek affairs could be paid off by concessions. This was a substantial support for Russia and a far cry from the procrastination shown by Stratford. It was prompted by the desire to take the edge off the Russian policy, to delay Russian interference into the Greek-Turkish conflict and prevent Russia from taking separate actions.

On may 12 Reis Effendi announced the acceptance of the terms of the ultimatum; the Sultan promised to send plenipotentiaries to the frontier with Russia to draft a treaty.

On October 7, there was signed the Akkerman convention into which all the provisions formulated by the Russian plenipotentiaries were incorporated. The cities of Anaklia, Sukhum, and Redout-kale, which the Turkish side had refused to recognise as belonging to Russia were now secured for her. The boundary line along the Danube was determined more accurately. The Russian merchants were given the right to trade freely anywhere in the Ottoman empire, while the Russian merchant fleet the possibility of unimpeded navigation in all seas and other waters in possession of the Ottoman empire, without exception. A special article provided for the removal of all the obstacles raised for Russia and powers friendly to her in utilizing the Straits for commercial purposes. In accordance with the convention, the Turkish side undertook to observe all the provisions of the Bucharest treaty relating to Serbia, to make more concrete the conditions for internal self-government of the principality and promised to confirm this by a Sultan's decree. The rights and privileges of the Danubian principalities provided for in the 1812 Treaty were now confirmed and broadened by a special act<sup>50</sup>.

But a settlement of her disputes with the Porte without Greece could not satisfy Russia, and London entertained no illusions in this respect. While in St. Petersburg, Wellington was able to "press forward" the Greek question,

49. Stratford energetically demanded that the Porte yield to the Russian demands. His advice was supported by the representatives of France and Austria—A. G. Stapleton, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 494.

50. *Supplement au Journal de St. Petersburg*, November 25, 1826. T. Uzefovich, *Dogovory Rossi s Vostokom politicheskiye i torgoviye* (The treaties between Russia and the East), St. Petersburg, 1869, p. 58 and further.

and he was guided in this task by the fears about which Nesselrode wrote so unequivocally.

The detailed instructions from Canning, with which the Duke arrived in St. Petersburg had one, though substantial, deficiency—they were difficult to implement. Wellington was to suggest that his Russian interlocutors agree to the British mediation in settling the Greek-Turkish conflict; should the offer be rejected by one of the sides in the conflict—the interference of two powers could be provided for. As for the means whereby all this could be accomplished and to what extent, Canning did not specify in the instructions Written for Wellington. But he insistently denied the Russian right to declare war even if the outcome of the negotiations were unfavourable<sup>51</sup>. This circumstance was stressed in Lord Wellington's memorandum dated March 7: a joint action was suggested "provided the means to be confined to those of remonstrances", refusal on the part of the Porte to comply with the recommendations cannot serve as a justification for a war on her<sup>52</sup>.

It goes without saying that St. Petersburg nurtured quite different plans. The five-year experience of joint demarshes and conferences was so deplorable that it necessitated giving Russia consent, be it tacit to act separately.

This was achieved. On April 4 (new style) Wellington, Nesselrode and Lieven signed a protocol which was to play a crucial role in the alignment of forces in the Balkans and the Near East for the critical years to come.

The fabric for determining the conditions for the statehood of the Greeks had been prepared by the very course of events. The difficult military situation prompted at least part of the Greek leadership to forgo the former demand or a full independence. In his important autographic letter dated March 1. (13) Wellington informed his Russian partners about the results of the conference between Stratford and several influential Greeks aboard a ship near the shores of the Hydra Island. They suggested that it would be desirable for Greece to obtain conditions similar to those the Raguza (Dubrovnik) Republic had enjoyed in medieval ages. Stratford had the impression that the Greeks would agree to pay an annual tribute to the Sultan, to pay the damages to Moslems for the land and other possessions, if the latter left the country; that the boundaries should be set depending on the hostilities. The interlocutors of the British diplomat "were not disposed to reject altogether the idea of according to the Porte some degree of participation in the appointment of the principal authorities<sup>53</sup>.

51. A. G. Stapleton, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, pl. 469.

52. The Archive of the Foreign Policy of USSR, 1826, document 4455, sheet 83.

53. The original in English and a French translation of the letter. The Archive of the

Though heavily in the nature of compromise and reflecting the views of the moderate part of Greek leadership the proposals provided a real foundation for restoring Greek statehood. Since they emanated from the Greeks themselves any affront to the Greek side, as happened with the memorandum of 1824, was ruled out in case of their adoption. Therefore, the Russian Ministry for Foreign Affairs seized upon what was, in essence, a Greek plan. The summary articles of a possible settlement, which were as it was indicated, "remis au Duc de Wellington de la main à la main" on March 11 (23), 1826 contained a suggestion that the overtures made by the Greek leaders to Stratford-Canning be taken as a starting point in negotiations and an attempt be made to achieve for the Greece the status once enjoyed by the Ragusa (Dubrovnik) Republic<sup>54</sup>. Wellington agreed to that and stressed again that the two powers should be guided by the proposals transmitted to Stratford Canning on the Hydra Island<sup>55</sup>.

The essence of the Russo-British arrangement made on April 4 (new style) consisted in the following. Russia would help to ensure a success of the British mediation for the purpose of pacification of Greece. The forms of Russian participation were to be determined in the talks that were yet to be held on the subject. The following conditions for settlement were laid down: the Greeks "will be ruled by authorities they will themselves elect or appoint, with the Porte having a say in their appointment"; "they will enjoy a complete freedom of conscience and relations and their domestic government will fall exclusively within their competence". The Turkish property on the liberated territory was subject to redemption.

Under the circumstances, those conditions were favourable to the Greeks. Their dependence thus amounted only to paying a fixed amount of tribute. It is important to stress here that the points relating to the State system of Greece and her relations with the Porte were not imposed from outside and coincided almost fully with the desires expressed by at least part of the leadership of the insurgents, with due account given to the realities of the situation.

Foreign Policy of Russia, the "Office" collection 1826, document 4455, sheets 219-222. It is clear from the memorandum that the Greek side made more definite statements than described in literature (D. Dakin, *op. cit.*, p. 178; C. W. Crawley, *op. cit.*, p. 95). The proposals were presented to Mavrocordatos, Trikupis and Zombatos.—C. W. Crawley, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

54. Points sommaires d'un arrangement éventuel à proposer au Duc de Wellington.—The Archive of the Foreign Policy of Russia, the "Office" collection, 1826, document 4456, sheets 2-5.

55. A. Wellington's memorandum, March 14 (26), 1826. The Archive of the Foreign Policy of Russia, the "Office" collection, document 4455, sheets 22-26.

The key paragraph was the third one which provided that, if mediation failed, the sides would consider the foregoing conditions as the basis for conciliation "to be implemented with their participation joint or separate, between the Porte and the Greeks"<sup>56</sup>. The most valuable result of the negotiations was, in the view of St. Petersburg, the agreement for a separate interference, which was wrested from Great Britain<sup>57</sup>. In conclusion, the sides assured each other of their complete disinterestedness: they would not seek for themselves any territorial aggrandizement and any exclusive influence or commercial advantages for their subjects.

Some British authors, even such eminent ones, as Harold Temperley, thus interpret the reason for this concession of their diplomacy: "Wellington, when arrived, was completely deceived" in the Russian capital, the Tsar pretended that the Greek affairs were not his concern, and "then by various methods the Duke was induced to sign the protocol on Greece on the 4th of April, of which he did not recognise the true import"<sup>58</sup>.

It is quite probable that the fieldmarshall did not realize the far reaching consequences that might result from the document to which he affixed his signature. But to consider that a most serious political action was so decided because the Duke was twisted round his little finger would be rather naive. St. Petersburg government didn't hide that, if necessary, they would not stop before a war in the name of Greek emancipation. In the foregoing points of the settlement it was indicated that Russia would work for their implementation, employing for the purpose "operations militaires en cas de rupture et son influence en cas de réconciliation avec la Porte"<sup>59</sup>. This initiative itself was launched by Great Britain because it realized that the Russian diplomacy had cast off the shackles of the "European concert". There was also not a flicker of hope that an arrangement could be achieved without concessions and that Tsarism would allow her to act all alone. "Metternich had failed to restrain Russia by a policy of doing nothing,—writes H. Temperley. "It was better for England to act with her than to remain isolated and powerless".

Canning, therefore would restrain her by "doing something"<sup>60</sup>. Thus, the

56. Protocol dated March 23 (April 4), 1826. *The Collection of Treaties and conventions...*, v. XI, St. Petersburg, 1895, No. 432, p. 341-343.

57. An influential russian observer wrote: "...le Protocol serait resté une lettre morte sans la clause que le Duc de Wellington n'a pas comprise et qui autoriserait la Russie à l'exécuteur séparément".—C. W. Crawley, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

58. H. Temperley, *op. cit.*, p. 354.

59. The Archive of the Foreign Policy of Russia, document 4456, sheet 4.

60. H. Temperley, *op. cit.*, p. 392.

question could be focussed only on the possible scale of Russian interference in the Greek-Turkish conflict; and this depended, to a certain extent, on the skill of the British plenipotentiary. In this sense, the latitude within which the Protocol signed by Wellington could be interpreted was extremely wide, up to military action, and this was what incurred the displeasure in London.

Canning showed enough political wisdom to spare his colleague from reproaches<sup>61</sup>. Officially, he expressed his satisfaction: the immediate objectives of the British diplomacy were achieved; the Russo-Turkish conflict was, if not prevented, then at least delayed, though at a price which was very high, considering the British political traditions.

Meanwhile the situation in Greece was becoming tragic. In April 1826, Missolonghi fell after a long siege.

On April 29, a week after this tragic event, the Greeks asked the British government to mediate in the conflict<sup>62</sup>.

At the same time the activization of the Russian policy began bearing fruits. In Greece itself, the proponents of Ioannes Capodistrias raised their heads. The patriotism of this person, his international reputation, and closeness to the highest St. Petersburg circles (officially, he continued in the Russian service)—inspired hopes that he would be of great service in emancipating his Motherland. He was a convinced champion of pro-Russian orientation of the Greeks: “The agelong experience and the traditions handed down from year to year, from generation to generation, have taught them... that after God, only Russia ensured their national existence”<sup>63</sup>. (L'autorité des siècles et celle des traditions qui avec le sang passent, d'âge en âge et de génération en génération, leur ont appris...qu'après Dieu c'est la Russie seule qui leur

61. “It is clear that Wellington did not realize what he was signing”, such was the opinion of G. Temperley. According to him “Canning fully realized the import of the third paragraph of the Protocol; but did not wish to recognize this before the pro-Turkish Tories” (H. Temperley, *op. cit.*, p. 515). Modern British historian Clayton expresses a similar view. “The potentially dangerous aspect of that Protocol as Canning immediately realized, was that Russia had retained the right to act separately against Turkey”, G. D. Clayton, *Britain and the Eastern Question*, London, 1971, p. 50-51. The British Minister deemed it necessary to enliven the European “concert”, and to involve Russia in it in order to tie her hands.

62. Copie d'un lettre de la Commission permanente de l'Assemblée nationale de la Grece a l'ambassadeur de S. M. Britannique pres de la Porte. Avril 1826 (The Archive of the Foreign Policy of Russia, 1826, document 6958, sheet 399-404). In contrast to the St. Petersburg Protocol in which the determination of the Greek territory was left for a future time, the Greeks made a demand, which was then difficult to implement, and namely, to guarantee equal rights for all parts of Greek irrespective of their success in the armed struggle.

63. I. Capodistrias to Nicholas I, August 12(24), 1826. C. W. Crawley, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

a révélé leur existence nationale). Capodistrias' attitude to Great Britain was one of distrust.

Capodistrias was looked upon more and more as a man capable of reconciling the warring factions (though he voiced a desire to withdraw "under the humble roof of his forefathers")<sup>64</sup>. The voices in favour of his election to the Greek presidency became louder and more insistent. On April, 1827 this was accomplished ; he was elected head of state for a seven-year term.

The official document testifying to his election was handed in to Capodistrias in June in St. Petersburg where he had arrived for talks with Nicholas I. He had five conferences with the Tsar and the arrangements agreed upon in the course of them were embodied in the Russian Cabinet's letter to the Greek President and the letter of reply from him. The letters set out the basis of the internal system for Greece and repeated the respective provisions of the Protocol of April 4, 1826 and also the convention of July 6, 1827<sup>65</sup>. Capodistrias made a suggestion that should the Porte decline the reconciliation, this would give Greece the right to act completely on her own. The Tsarist government gave a promise to grant a pecuniary subsidy to Capodistrias<sup>66</sup>.

Capodistrias paid visits to London and Paris, which, however, brought no consolation; he was received with due respect but coldly and was given no promise of support.

It should be noted that the signing of the Russo-British Protocol of April 4, 1826 did not mean at all that the sides moved further in full accord with each other. In fact, they acted in different directions. The Russian diplomacy was trying to push its colleagues forward, but the latter were set on slowing down the course of events. Canning who had prepared the Protocol in deep secrecy from the Ambassadors of Austria and France became a champion of collective actions. This change of mood took place in response to the situation that was developing at that time: Russia had consented to the British mediation in the Greek-Turkish conflict. Now the task was to induce the participants in the European concert to agree to that, and at the same time, to divert the Russians away from direct negotiations with Greece and Turkey (such were provided for in the Protocol) into the maze of endless discussions and, in the meantime, to consolidate the British influence in Greece. The far-

64. The British diplomacy began showing a heightened interest to the person of Capodistrias. The British Ambassador in Paris Lord Granville and the Lord High Commissioner of the Ionian Islands General F. Adam had conferred with him.—*Ibid.*, pp. 68-70, 81-82.

65. See below.

66. I. S. Dostyan, *Rossiya i Balkanskij vopros* (Russia and the Balkan question), Moscow, 1972, p. 253.

sighted British diplomat foresaw such a turn in events already in February 1826 when he put his signature under the instructions for Duke Wellington. The problem for him now was how to keep Russia from war if Turkey rejected the British mediation. In such eventuality, a combination with Austria and France would have to be arrived at; the former feared the war, while the latter was against a partition of any Ottoman dominions<sup>67</sup>.

In June 1826 the Russian Ministry for Foreign Affairs made its first representation in London concerning the implementation of the Protocol provisions<sup>68</sup>.

Canning's reaction to this left much to be desired: while profuse in assurances of his readiness to cooperate and implement the St. Petersburg Protocol, he was however, extremely "reserved" (according to Lieven apropos a possible armed clash with Turkey, an old ally of Great Britain which was regarded with favour by his colleagues in the Cabinet? The Foreign Secretary wrote<sup>69</sup>: "...The British Government could not consider the refusal of the Porte to listen to proposals for an accomodation with Greece as a just cause of war on the part of the Power through whose mediation those proposals may have been made". "It is necessary to say how earnestly and anxiously the British Government continued to deprecate the breaking out of a war which... might nevertheless lead to complications fatal to the general tranquility of Europe"<sup>70</sup>. This actually could mean that head of the Foreign Office was refusing to support Russia and demanding at the same time that she observe paragraph 5 of St. Petersburg Protocol<sup>71</sup>. Canning was a realist and clearly saw that any chances to "freeze" the Greek question simply did not exist. And, therefore, he agreed to threaten the Porte with recall of allied Ambassadors from Constantinople and a rapprochement with Greece which would find expression in sending consuls there, recognizing her government and in the future,—the independence of Morea and the Islands<sup>72</sup>. But all this could

67. A. G. Stapleton, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 477.

68. A draft despatch to H. A. Lieven, dated June 10, 1826 (old style) and endorsed by the Tzar. The Archive of the Foreign Policy of Russia, the "Office" collection, 1826, document 6959, sheets 52-55.

69. H. A. Lieven to Nesselrode, August 24 (September 5), 1826. The Archive of the Foreign Policy of Russia, the "Office" collection, 1826, document 6958, sheet 464.

70. G. Canning to H. A. Lieven, September 4, 1826 (new style)—The Archive of the Foreign Policy of Russia, 1826, document 6958, sheets 429, 427-428.

71. It contained a refusal of the sides to any territorial aggrandizement, and to claim any exclusive influence in the European Turkey and commercial privileges for their subjects in this area.

72. J. Canning to H. A. Lieven, September 4, 1826. The Archive of the Foreign Policy of the USSR, the "Office" collection, 1826, document 6958, sheets 431, 434-435.

be accomplished only in the course of a lengthy procedure with the participation of France, Austria and Prussia<sup>73</sup>.

St. Petersburg confirmed that it agreed with this programme aimed at taking positive action and exercising pressure to bear upon the Porte<sup>74</sup>. However, the Russian capital responded with alarm and irritation to the Fabian tactics adopted by Canning. In the despatch to Lieven dated September 17, the latter was instructed to tell Canning that Russia had set about the Greek question "...avec la ferme resolution de la resondre". Therefore, just sending consuls to Hellas was not enough; they should be instructed "en aidant à la formation d'un gouvernement investi d'un veritable pouvoir" while, on the other hand, it was necessary "de paralyser les effets des secours que le pasha d'Egypte donne à la Porte et qui seuls on fait changer de face à la guerre". This could be accomplished by sending allied fleets. One cannot regard with indifference the aid in the form of men, ships and munitions being rendered by France to the punitive forces<sup>75</sup>. The fact that the other note was also dated September 17 indicated the Russian side was increasing her pressure. The note said that in case of a deadlock in the Russo-Turkish negotiations, Russia would have to assert her rights by the force of arms, and that "il doit ainsi être entendu que les clauses subsisteront dans toute leur force à l'égard d'Angleterre". It was further stated that "et peut-être même bientôt la reconnaissance de l'indépendance de la Morée et des îles de l'Archipel" will be achieved. It was stated that nothing could be more detrimental to the two principal christian states, "rien ne placerait leur politique dans un plus faux jour que d'annoncer par des mesures d'éclat qu'elles vont pacifier le Levant et de ne pouvoir ou de n'oser ensuite realiser cette volonté"<sup>76</sup>.

In January 1827 St. Petersburg came to the conclusion that "the signing of the April Protocol by Duke Wellington can be explained solely by the British desire to stop a unilateral Russian interference in favour of the Greeks<sup>77</sup>, and that Canning had become a champion of collective action of the powers also for this reason.

On learning about the Russo-British Protocol Metternich exclaimed:

73. From the J. Canning's instruction to Ch. Stratford, September 20, 1826, *ibid*, sheets 155-156.

74. Having stressed that the recognition of Greek independence can take place "possibly soon".—The Archive of the Foreign Policy of Russia, document 6958, sheets 223-224.

75. A draft despatch, dated September 17 (old style), 1826, and approved by the Tsar.

76. A draft despatch, dated September 17 (old style), 1826, and approved by the Tsar, the Archive of the Foreign Policy of Russia, the "Office" collection, 1826, document 6959, sheets 219-220, 223-224.

“what a folly.” An influential Russian observer summed up the views of the Austrian Chancellor very simply: “la pacification de la Grèce par la destruction des grecs”<sup>78</sup>. Having refused to participate in the negotiations and having drawn Prussia on to the same path, Metternich found himself in a state of complete isolation. “...The Austrian minister lost completely his ability to control the course of Europe in international relations; Austria found itself pushed aside from the main currents of diplomatic activity”—writes the American researcher Barbara Jelavich. A year later, Metternich complained: “...At present I am good for nothing...I am spending my life propping up mouldering building”<sup>79</sup>.

France chose a different course. The ultraroyalist cabinet of J. B. Vilelle was to exist for only several months more. The opposition then was growing; the latter was supported by the major bourgeois circles who demanded to make France’s foreign policy more active and to ensure markets for the country. The industrial crisis which broke out in 1826 intensified its discontent. The Cabinet had to take all this into account. But at the same time France had neither the necessary forces nor the possibilities for establishing her sole influence in Greece in her confrontation with Great Britain. Canning stated bluntly that he would not tolerate a French domination. The assistance being rendered to the Egyptian viceroy by the French Government caused a deep indignation of the French public which was deeply moved by the fall of the Greek stronghold Missolonghi and insensed by the atrocities committed there.

Paris was not able to offer resistance on the Greek question to the bloc of the two powers; thus it had no other choice but to join Russia and Great Britain and try to achieve its objectives as part of the trio. In November 1826 Paris played host to the conference between the Ambassadors of Russia and Great Britain and the Louis Philippe’s ministers. The latter submitted a proposal to guarantee the integrity of the Ottoman Empire all throughout its breadth and width. St. Petersburg immediately responded by a formal refusal to “push” the matter in this way<sup>80</sup>. The difficult negotiations were transferred to London. In order to bring pressure to bear on the intransigent partners

77. *The Collection of the Treaties and Conventions, concluded by Russia with Foreign Powers*, v. XI, St. Petersburg, 1895, p. 350.

78. *Notions sommaires sur la pensée des différents cabinets dans les affaires de la Grèce*. C. R. Crawley, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

79. B. Jelavich, *The Habsburg Empire in European Affairs 1814-1918*, Chicago, 1969 p. 36, 25.

80. H. Temperley, *op. cit.*, p. 395-396.

H. A. Lieven was instructed to invoke “as a last resort” paragraph 3 of the April Russo-British convention which provided for separate action<sup>81</sup>. Canning forgot about his protests against the extermination of the Greeks and, under the pretext of evolving a common policy with France, instructed his Ambassador in Constantinople to suspend his work on the April Protocol; Wellington “recuse le premier devant les consequences necessaires de son propre ouvrage” (the April Protocol)<sup>82</sup>.

In spring 1827, the British Prime Minister Paul Liverpool was afflicted with paralysis. The struggle for power ensued, and George Canning who enjoyed a great authority in the Parliament and the country emerged the victor. King George IV had to appoint his personal enemy Prime Minister. The “iron Duke” felt offended, refused to participate in the Cabinet and gave vent to his pro-Turkish sentiment. All this had the effect of prolonging the British-Russo-French negotiations, difficult as they were. K. V. Nesselrode threatened that, if they fail, Russia would resort to separate actions which were provided for in St. Petersburg Protocol<sup>83</sup>. And only on July 6, 1827 the conference ended in signing an agreement. Its six open articles repeated the April Protocol with some editorial changes. What constituted its main point was the additional secret article on which the debate had been focused, because it provided for measures aimed at implementing the arrangement<sup>84</sup>: the powers took an obligation to adopt measures for a rapprochement with the Greeks (establishment of commercial relations with them, sending consuls), if the Porte refused to accept mediation. If one of the belligerent sides refused to accept the armistice, the three powers undertook to apply measures to achieve it, without, however, allowing themselves to be drawn into hostilities<sup>85</sup>. With this in view, the governments were to send respective instructions to their admirals who were in command of the squadrons in the Mediterranean Sea.

The agreement was the outcome of a struggle and compromises; hence, the ambiguity of the provisions in its secret article which, though included on the insistence of the Russian side, did not embody all its desires<sup>86</sup>. Thus the

81. K. V. Nesselrode to H. A. Lieven, September 9(21), 1827). *The Collection of the Treaties and Conventions...*, vol. II, p. 350. (In Russian-French).

82. *Ibid.*

83. *Ibid.*, p. 355.

84. H. Temperley writes: “It was pretty clear now that unless he consented to use force, Russia would go forward alone”. Temperley, *op. cit.*, p. 398.

85. See the text of the agreement of July 6, 1827 in: *The Collection of Treaties and Conventions...*, v. II, pp. 356-361. (In Russian).

86. H. Temperley writes: “Lieven secured the main Russian point by obtaining Canning’s

statement about non-participation in hostilities was the creation of Lord Dudley and Prince Polygnac but they refused to include a provision prohibiting war contraband. Then Lieven secured a provision to the effect that instructions for the admirals should prescribe by force the delivery of arms and munitions from Turkey and Egypt if the Turkish side refused to accept the armistice.

However, a week after the agreement was signed its text together with its secret article appeared in the "Times" newspaper. The secret came out into the open. Canning and Polygnac hurled at each other accusations of inability to keep secrets. At the height of those events Canning died (August 8, 1827). The British foreign policy was thus deprived of a firm guiding hand. The new premier Lord Goderich was reputed to be a complete mediocrity in foreign affairs and was only a person of transition; Lord Dudley who became head of the Foreign Office was "timid to a fault" and tried to avoid taking initiatives without Canning's instructions. Great was the perplexity of Vice-Admiral Edward Codrington, an old sailor, who had at one time been with Nelson, and now commanded the British squadron in the Mediterranean when he received the instruction about using force and not launch into hostilities. He wrote to Stratford who was in Constantinople that he could not understand how they would be able to prevent the Turks from supplying their troops in Greece by force but without launching into hostilities<sup>87</sup>.

What happened then is well known. The admirals interpreted the instruction in their own way: on October 8(20), 1827 the allied British-Russo-French fleet commanded by Codrington, Geiden, and de Rigny destroyed in the Bay of Navarino the Turkish-Egyptian fleet which, in terms of the number of ships and guns, was superior to it.

Temperley concluded his description of Navarino with the following words: "The pride of Ibrahim was humbled in the dust and the freedom of Greece was thunderously proclaimed amid the roar of Codrington's guns"<sup>88</sup>. This statement contains two serious inaccuracies: a factual one, because the ship's teams of three powers showed an equal courage in the battle; out of 1300 guns on the allied fleet, the British ships carried 472; Codrington was commander of the allied fleet only because he was senior in rank (vice-admiral); and also an evaluative one—the emancipation of Greece was yet far off at that time.

consent to the secret article, agreeing to the use of force, if necessary". "But if force was to be used, England must act with and restrain Russia". H. Temperley, *op. cit.*, pp. 399, 398.

87. *Ibid.*, p. 404.

88. *Ibid.*, p. 409.

London did not conceal its anxiety in connection with the results of the glorious battle and its desire not to quarrel with the Porte. Canning was dead. His successors who lacked in far-sightedness turned into the old road leading to an unconditional preservation of the Ottoman empire. Lord Dudley invited Lieven and in the presence of the French Ambassador Polygnac and on behalf of the London and Paris Cabinets expressed a hope that “cet incident inattendu” (as he termed a great naval battle in history) would not influence the relations with the Porte and that, in no case, could they consider themselves to be at war with the Ottoman Empire<sup>89</sup>.

In the meantime, the behaviour of the Sultan’s government became more and more defiant. Rather than agree to reconciliation with the Greeks, the Turks remained as intransigent in their attitude as they had been before the Navarino débâcle. The maximum to what the Divan agreed was to pardon the insurgents for the past and to announce amnesty, provided they expressed obedience. The three Courts were presented with the claim to redeem the damages sustained by the Turkish-Egyptian fleet and apologize before the Sultan<sup>90</sup>. On December 8, after it became clear that all attempts at persuasion failed, the Ambassadors of Russia, Great Britain, and France demanded their passports. During their farewell visit to the Turkish Ministry for Foreign Affairs the Ambassadors of the latter two countries gave their assurances of entertaining the feelings of friendship toward the Porte. Any fears the Turkish dignitaries might have had that a war would have to be waged against the coalition were thus dispelled.

There was now only one choice left open to Russia for achieving the provisions contained in St. Petersburg Protocol—to resort to the article which provided for the possibility of a separate action. A new Russo-Turkish war was now imminent.

From the viewpoint of the foreign policy, Russia had been prepared for it splendidly. By her extremely successful manouevring the Russian diplomacy had wrested from her partners and competitors all the trump cards for a big game. According to Wellington Tsar Nicholas I in confidential conferences with him “has upon more than one occasion expressed me his magnanimous determination not to add even a village to his dominions or to augment his influence by any political aggrandizement<sup>91</sup>. The Duke expressed a wish

89. *The Collection of Treaties and Conventions...*, v. II, p. 366.

90. A. D. Novitchev, *Istoriya Turtsii* (History of Turkey), vol. II, part I, Leningrad, 1968, p. 157.

91. A. Wellington to K. V. Nesselrode, March 1(13), 1826. The Archive of the Foreign Policy of Russia, the “Office” collection, 1826, document 4455, sheet 162.

that the Monarch would—in order to dispell suspicions and false rumours—state his intentions on paper complete with official signatures and a stamp on sealing-wax. This was incorporated in paragraph 5 of St. Petersburg Protocol, repeated in Article 5 of the London Convention of June 24 (July 6), 1827, and confirmed in the so-called protocol on disinterestedness of November 30 (December 12), 1827<sup>92</sup>. The Russian diplomacy explained her actions following the Akkerman convention exclusively by the disinterested desire to emancipate the Greek people because her own claims with regard to the Danubian principalities, commerce and state boundaries had already been met to its complete satisfaction in it: by entering the difficult conflict which may result in a war the Russian diplomacy was ready, nevertheless, to cross out her recent achievements, as Nesselrode wrote, “Russia sacrifices her own interests for the sake of the common ones, and demonstrates that its policy vis-a-vis Greece should exclude all suspicion...”<sup>93</sup>. Of course, those “modest” people from the Tsarist Government were forgetting to mention that, in doing so, they pursued the objective of increasing their own influence in the Balkans.

On the other hand, in an effort to evade the Russo-Turkish war the British Government had gone too far on the road of cooperation with Russia. After two protocols, one agreement, and the Navarin battle, it was impossible for her to go to defense of Turkey. Another impediment was provided by the great scale of the philhellenic sentiment in Great Britain itself. The possibilities for initiative and the freedom of maneuver had been completely lost by the St. James’ Cabinet; the most it could do was to desert its Russian ally on the threshold of war, which it actually did.

The fact that in the 20’s of that century the Foreign Office was left even without a taken diplomatic screen under whose cover it might intervene energetically and openly into the Russo-Turkish conflict was remembered thereafter for many generations. Half a century later, at the height of the 1875-1878 Eastern crisis Marquis Salisbury one of the influential members of Disraeli’s Cabinet expressed a fear that the Foreign Secretary might again to content himself “with writing a pathetic despatch on the mode of Lord Aberdeen’s after the peace of Adrianople”<sup>94</sup>.

As was justly indicated by the British historian M. S. Anderson, “alone

92. See *The Collection of Treaties and Conventions Concluded by Russia with the Foreign Powers*, vol. II, St. Petersburg, 1895, pp. 343, 359, 382.

93. The Archive of the Foreign Policy of Russia, the “Office” collection, 1826, document 6959, sheet 225.

94. P. Salisbury to E. Derby, January 19, 1977.—Gw. Cecil, *Life of Robert Marquis of Salisbury*, vol. 2, London, 1921, p. 124.

of the great powers she (Russia—ed.) had positive grievances against the Porte, really deep-rooted sentimental ties with the Greeks and the ability to threaten the heart of the Ottoman Empire with military attack”<sup>95</sup>. It took more than a year or two of diplomatic preparation for their realization. The main landmark on the road of such preparation was the signing of St. Petersburg Protocol in spring 1826. Though modest in form (“only” a protocol, “only” two participants) this document played a determining role in the alignment of forces on the international arena for the entire crucial period of the Eastern crisis of the 20’s of the 19th century, of which the emergence in February 1830 of the independent Greek state was a most important result. It allowed Russia to go to war, whose successful ending and Article 10 of the Adrianople Peace Treaty compelled the Porte to recognize, according to A. Vacalopoulos<sup>96</sup>, the decisions of the powers regarding the creation of the Greek state and her boundaries.

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95. M. S. Anderson, *The Eastern Question 1774-1923*, London, etc., 1966, p. 59.

96. A. Vacalopoulos, *Histoire de la Grèce moderne*, Paris, 1975, p. 122.