

REVIEWS OF BOOKS

N. Svoronos, *Le commerce de Salonique au XVIII^e siècle*, Paris 1956. (pages XVI & 430 with many statistical tables, seven charts and two maps).

The official correspondence of consuls accredited to various countries, documents which are kept in the archives of foreign ministries, constitutes an excellent documentary source for scientific research, not only for the commerce between the respective countries, but also for the study of political developments at the time. Of special merit to the study of Greece under the Ottoman rule are the consular archives of countries which maintained consuls in such large commercial centers of Turkey as Constantinople, Smyrna, Thessalonike and other cities. Venice and France were the two principal countries with such consulates. The Venetian records have already been studied by the Greek Professor Spyr. Lambros, the Italian Professor Cessi, and, recently, by Constantine Mertziou whose book, "Historical Monuments of Macedonia" published in Greek by the Society for Macedonian Studies, has a wealth of historical data. Mich. Laskaris was the first to study the French archives. His book "Salonique à la fin du XVIII^e siècle d'après les rapports consulaires français" (1939), not only pointed out the importance of the French consular reports, but actually included in its text a number of them pertaining to Thessalonike and its suburbs, its commerce, the 1779 disorders and their subduance, as well as a number of other interesting points.

Mr Svoronos follows Laskaris' example in pursuing his research further into French archives. The first product of his research studies was the publication, in 1951, of an index of the correspondence of French consuls referring to Thessalonike and Kavalla¹. The second, is the present work which, as its title indicates, is concerned mostly with the commerce of Thessalonike. However, as early as the first pages of its introduction, the author sets out as a second objective the study of the development and formulation of the national consciousness of the Greek nation and the modern Greek society, especially during the 18th century.

The author performed a conscientious job in accumulating a mass of interesting material which he utilized and presented adroitly. Numerous tables and charts present clearly the foreign commercial activities in Thessalonike, and their fluctuations. The author successfully depicts the reasons which affected the commercial activities of foreign countries in Thessalonike, as well as the various changes they passed through. He attributes all these

1. N. Svoronos, *Salonique et Cavalla (1686 - 1792). Inventaire des correspondances des consules de France au Levant*; Paris 1951.

changes to military and political events of the period, to wars between the European states, such as the wars between Austria and Turkey, Russia and Turkey, to revolutions, such as the French Revolution, to internal disorders in Turkey, and to famine, plague epidemics and other reasons.

The book is divided into seven chapters preceeded by an introduction. The introduction based on consular sources, deals with the population of Thessalonike, the central administration and the social disturbances which occurred during this period (*troubles sociaux*). The description however of the insubordination and the arbitrary activities of some powerful Turkish beys and pashas by the term "social disorder", which has a different connotation today, misses the point.

Initially, the first chapter evolves around the economic and the taxation aspects of commerce. Subsequently, it discusses the wars, piracy and the plague which considerably affected commercial transactions. The second chapter is devoted to the commercial intercourse of foreign countries with Thessalonike, as well as that of the foreign communities of the city, such as the French, British, Venetians, Italians, Ragousians, Dutch, Danish, Swedish, Germans, Austrians, Russians and also Turks, Jews and Greeks. The third chapter deals with the local trade and the various bazaars and trade fairs. The fourth chapter is concerned with external trade and the fifth with the fluctuations of external trade and the factors which caused these fluctuations. The subject of the sixth chapter is the balance of external trade, while the seventh chapter analyzes the results of the economic activities of Thessalonike. Additional notes and indexes of names and other items also appear in the book.

By merely presenting here the chapter titles and briefly mentioning their contents, one can easily perceive the great volume, diversity and importance of the data which the author accumulated from the French consular archives. Many times the information contained therein trespasses the boundaries of commerce and extends into other aspects of life under the Ottoman rule, such as administration, legal and illegal taxation, the disorders of the janissaries, uprisings of the beys and pashas, piracy, smuggling, agriculture, industry, the fluctuations in the value of money e.t.c. As the author justly points out, these data lead to the conclusion that Thessalonike had, by the 18th century, become the transport center, the commercial capital and, from all aspects, the most important city of the Balkan peninsula.

The author notes, rightly so, that the information contained in the archives, particularly on the import and export trade, is at times contradictory. He, therefore, proceeds to investigate the reasons which led to the appearance of different figures. Frequently, he succeeds in his effort with good chance of accuracy, by pointing out the different terms employed by the French consuls, on the one hand, and the Marseilles Chamber of Commerce on the other, while preparing trade statistics. His conclusion is that the statistics of the French consuls are closer to reality. On the basis of these statistics the external trade of Thessalonike appears to have attained an almost firm size with only certain fluctuations. The author correctly

establishes the factors which influenced the curve of the external trade by taking into consideration the military and political developments of the time. He observes, with justification, that these statistics do not portray the entire spectrum of commercial activity, inasmuch as they do not include the trade carried out by Greeks with Venice and other cities by sea route, and Austro-Hungary and Germany by land route. He particularly stresses the point of how the great volume and the importance of the transactions with the latter countries affected the accumulation of wealth in the hands of Greek merchants from Macedonia, who took up their residence especially in Austro-Hungarian cities. I think that he correctly interpretes the reasons which prompted the channeling of this wealth to banking and financing enterprizes and not to the development of industry, neither locally nor abroad. In Turkey, where property assets and life could not be guaranteed, it was not safe to show obvious evidence of wealth, less the Turkish authorities, or simply the local beys and pashas be unduly attracted by it. Nor was it an easy task for a foreigner to establish an industry in a foreign country.

Commencing from the point of the accumulation of wealth, the author discusses the formulation of a commercial bourgeois class and broadly the organization of Greek society and the various class conflicts which emerged within its framework. He attributes to the export trade (p. 366) the increased misery of the peasants, both Turks and Greeks, their opposition to the local aghas, and the conflicts between Greek peasants and Greek merchants. However, he observes, the latter conflicts receded whenever the establishment of a common front would seem necessary against the Turks. This situation was conducive to the strengthening of the national consciousness and the revolutionary spirit among the peasants, who, gradually, appear to become the essential factor of the war of independence. To this it should be added that the Turkish peasants would also oppose the local aghas. I think these thoughts, and similar others, emanate from the theories of dialectic materialism, on the basis of which some contemporary Greek Marxists, believe that, in the name of historical science, they can interpret the Greek War of Independence (1821), a fact which has no foundation in historical truth. It is regrettable that the author in his factual and positive research on the commerce of Thessalonike deemed it necessary to base his observations on a shaky, theoretical foundation, which, in fact, is foreign to the main subject of his work. However, a definite conclusion of this book is the unchallengable truth that the Greeks were the main intermediaries of commerce in the Balkan peninsula during the 18th century, thus establishing the economic unity of the Balkans (p. 356). No mention is made of the other Christian Balkan peoples. To the Greeks it is also attributed the introduction to the Balkans of the principles and ideas of Western civilization, which they themselves were the first to adopt and to assimilate. As the author writes (p. 356) *Ainsi les Grecs, élément interbalkanique, devinrent les intermédiaires de l'eupéanisation des peuples balcaniques, dont l'histoire entre dès lors dans le cadre de l'histoire générale de l'Europe.*

In addition to these general observations it should be pointed out that many times, in certain chapters, the author repeats the same things, a fact that unduly increases the volume of his work. Also, he makes certain minor errors which could have been avoided with more careful scrutiny. For example, on page 25 he writes "tour de Karamanie" an error which is correctly changed on page 376 to "Kalamarie", i. e. the tower of Kalamaria, a suburb of Thessalonike. On page 182, Veria, which the Turks called Caraveria, is referred to as a town of Thessaly. On page 261, writing about tobacco qualities he refers to the town of Yénidjé Carassou in terms denoting that there are two distinct towns (page 262 à Yénidjé, à Carassou). This town is in the vicinity of Xanthi and is called Carassou because it is near the Nestos (Carassou) river, in contradistinction to Yenidje Vardar, the present town of Yiannitsa. On page 271, reference is made to the fact that the French purchased sponges from Sapsilar¹. However, Sapsilar (today's Sapai) is an inland town located east of Komotini with Alum² mines—from which the town claims its name—not sponges.

In the bibliography I notice that the valuable study of Pantelis Contoyannis «Οἱ προστατευόμενοι»³ is omitted.

Nevertheless, despite the minor errors this work is an important and useful contribution to the study of commercial activities of the period of Ottoman rule during the 18th century.

STILPON P. KYRIAKIDES

1. P. 271. *Sapsilar, éloignée d'une centaine des milles de Salonique, était l'endroit où les Français pouvaient acheter cette marchandise (éponges) à un prix raisonnable.*

2. Šap means Alum and Šapsilar are miners of Alum.

3. *Ἀθηνα*, 29, 1917, 1-160.