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THE GREEK QUESTION

The view from Odessa 1815-1822

AS GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW RUSSIA, THE COMTE DE LANGERON, the French émigré in Russian service since 1790, had a wide array of responsibilities for a militarily and diplomatically strategic area larger than France. Not only was he in charge of administrative tasks ranging from fighting plagues of locusts, to defending the rights of foreign colonists, to administering the quarantine, he also had to make decisions based on imperial policies which were constantly changing. After 1815, Alexander I's ideological zig-zags left those not in close contact confused and vulnerable. The Tsar and his ministers did an inadequate job of communicating those policy changes in a timely manner, and the Greek Question focused in one issue all of the contradictory and complex strands of responsibilities Langeron wielded.

For Europeans, the Greek Question at the beginning of the 1820s was by no means a clear one, as could be seen in the learned diplomatic discussions as to the Greeks and their goals.¹ For the Russians, their expansion to the south brought them into direct economic and political contact with the Ottoman Empire as well as the religious competition that had long existed between the Moscow and Constantinople based churches. For Langeron, the Greek Question in 1821 broke down into three aspects that directly touched him: the commercial, cultural, and religious role of the Greeks in the development of Southwest Russia; the activities of the *Philike Hetairia* — both direct and indirect; and the Northern Revolt and its consequences that led to a British-Russian standoff in the Black Sea region in the spring and summer of 1821.

Langeron was the most important Russian official in Odessa and Southwest Russia in the six years before the Greek Revolution and it was his task to turn the region into a strong economic and military base. He served as Kherson Military

1. Archives du Ministère des Affaires étrangères (MAE), Correspondance politique, Grèce, 1, September 28, 1821, "Sur l'émancipation de la Grèce,": 227-230.

Governor, Commander of the Don and Black Sea Cossacks, and City Governor of Odessa, as well as Governor-General of New Russia. He completed many of the plans for the region begun by the Duc de Richelieu including establishing the free port for Odessa in 1817.² Aside from his military role, one of the most important parts of his position was to deal with the foreign consuls resident in Odessa and increase the flow of trade, especially the grain trade. The most significant group he would deal with in commercial matters were the Greeks, with their commercial network, ships, and capital resources.

Dealing with the Greeks was not an especially easy task for Langeron. The signals coming out of St. Petersburg were hazy; especially those channeled through Ioannis Capo d'Istria, who with Karl V. Nesselrode advised the Tsar on foreign policy. One of Langeron's prerogatives was the issuing of passports, which he did freely with the Greeks — especially those going and coming from Moldavia in December 1820 and the first part of 1821 — because he believed that to be the desire of the court. He personally did not admire the Greeks, especially the Phanariotes. In so doing he mirrored the sentiments of many of the Enlightenment era brought up on Gibbon's *Decline and fall*. "Jamais la nature humaine ne s'est montrée dans ce degré d'avilissement et de dégradation dans lequel sont tombés les Grecs depuis Constantin jusqu'à nos jours." He confirmed his opinions of them on the basis of his experience with the Greek Phanariotes in the Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia. He noted that "Je ne crains point d'être soupçonné d'exagération ni accusé de calomnie lorsque j'affirmerai qu'il n'existe pas sur la terre une race de scélérats plus immonde que les Fanariottes [...]."³ Once he assumed his duties in Southwest Russia, however, Langeron saw the Greek merchants as useful for his plans to increase trade in the region and also as valuable contributors to the cultural growth of Odessa.

This is not the place to give a lengthy description of the *Philike Hetairia*'s ("The Friendly Society's") activities in Russia. One should look to G. L. Arsh's excellent *Eteristskoe dvizhenie v Rossii* for the best single treatment of the topic.⁴ Langeron dealt with the movement that appeared in Russia just at the time that Greece and the Eastern Mediterranean became a focal point for European statesmen. Three Greek merchants in Odessa founded the society in 1814 and from its base reached out to have a unifying effect for Greeks in the Black Sea and Eastern Mediterranean area.⁵ The society attracted the ambitious, upwardly mobile merchants in the Greek hegira across Europe, many of whom were also members of Masonic lodges in Odessa, Moscow, Vienna, and Belgrade.

2. For the role of the Duc de Richelieu in Odessa, see Emmanuel de Waresquiel, *Le duc de Richelieu: 1766-1822* (Paris: Perrin, 1990) and E. I. Druzhinina, *Iuzhnaia Ukraina: 1800-1825 gg.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1970).

3. MAE, Mémoires et documents, Russie, 23: 12, 14. Langeron's Mémoires.

4. G. L. Arsh, *Eteristskoe dvizhenie v Rossii* (Moscow: Nauka, 1970).

5. Barbara Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan entanglements 1806-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991): 51.

After the rejection of its entreaties for direct Russian assistance by Capo d'Istria in 1817, the society moved its headquarters from Odessa to Constantinople: but Russia's centrality to the society's plans remained. The group's leaders spread the impression that Capo d'Istria, influenced Alexander in their favor. The messages coming through Russian channels to Langeron did not contradict that impression. However, the diplomatic structure erected at Vienna did not tolerate liberation struggles such as that advocated by the *Philike Hetairia*. Russian support would not be forthcoming, nor would Capo d'Istria take leadership of the national movement in 1820 and 1821. However, this was not communicated clearly to Langeron and he encouraged the Greeks in their activities by aiding in the establishment of a Greek commercial college and freely granting passports and visas to activists such as Nicholas Galatis and warmly welcoming Alexander Ypsilanti in 1820.⁶

There is no single document that specifically ties Langeron to the revolutionary activities of the *Philike Hetairia* as a witting advocate of the Greek program in 1821. In fact, philosophically, he did not support their goals. However, the circumstantial case is impressive that he rendered important assistance because he believed that this was in line with traditional Russian policy toward the Balkans and the advance of civilization against the despotic Turks.

In the four previous years, the Greeks increased their recruiting activity in and around Odessa, and many Russians knew of the preparations made by the Greeks for an uprising against the Turks. In the summer of 1820 Langeron had extended conversations with Alexander Ypsilanti about the Greek desire "to resurrect ancient Greece" by taking advantage of the discontent with Turkish rule. He chose not to report this conversation to St. Petersburg and permitted Ypsilanti and his colleagues full freedom of action in Odessa.⁷

In the first three months of 1821 Langeron rendered important assistance to Ypsilanti and his partisans by removing any obstacles to their movements in Southwest Russia and their accumulation of logistical support. He did nothing at all to impede the Greeks from buying weapons, forming armed bands, and leaving for the Principalities. When Alexander Ypsilanti arrived in Kishinev in 1821 he received the active cooperation of his friend M. F. Orlov who assisted him in finding housing and logistical support. The Bessarabian district leader I. N. Inzov also helped the Hetairists. The ties between the Masonic lodges in Kishinev and Odessa, where Langeron was thought to be the Grand Master were close. Because

6. For more background on the Greek secret society, see G. L. Arsh, *Tainoe obshchestvo "Filike Eterii"* (Moscow: Nauka, 1965); The second and third chapters of Douglas Dakin's *The Greek struggle for independence: 1821-1833* (London: B.T. Batsford, Ltd., 1973); and two articles in the work edited by Richard Clogg, *The struggle for Greek independence* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1973): C.M. Woodhouse's "Kapodistria and the *Philike Etairia*, 1814-1821," and George Frangos' "The *Philike Etairia*: a premature national coalition." See also M. S. Anderson, *The Eastern Question* (New York: Macmillan, 1966): 50-53.

7. G. L. Arsh, *Eteristskoe...*, *op. cit.*: 212-213, 261. See also *Le Moniteur universel*, 111 (April 21, 1821).

of his official status he was well informed through his various colleagues in Bessarabia.⁸

James Yeames, the British Consul General, reported to the British Foreign Minister, Viscount Castlereagh (Henry Robert Stewart, the Marquis of Londonderry) on March 16/28 that the Greeks of Odessa were buying all of the firearms available and leaving the city with official permission in bands of twenty to thirty at a time. Those who were too old or feeble contributed money to the cause.⁹ The French Consul, A. A. Challaye, reported to Baron Etienne Pasquier, at that time Minister of Foreign Affairs, that the Greeks of Odessa, indeed all south Russia and as far north as Moscow were giving large amounts of money for the effort and providing fighters to go to Iasi, “le lieu désigné comme rendez-vous général.” The French consul saw this movement to be “au moins dirigé maintenant par les officiers supérieurs et généraux au service de Russie.”¹⁰ The consuls estimated that the number of Greeks joining the Northern Revolt from Southwest Russia approached three to four thousand in total.

The specific issue that placed Langeron under the harsh criticism of the Tsar was his continued cooperation with the Greeks in March 1821, after the outbreak of the Northern Revolt. He had received a letter dated February 26/March 10, 1821 from Ypsilanti in Iasi in which the Greek leader responded to a “note” of inquiry from Langeron of February 24/March 8. The revolutionary leader addressed Langeron as “Cher Comte” in a document that effectively illustrated how the Greeks were able to take advantage of the poor communications between the Tsar and his officials on the Southwest frontier. After noting that he was responding to the call of his nation, Ypsilanti wrote:

“[...] j’ai fait le pas que sans doute vous avez appris déjà. Sa Majesté L’Empereur est informé de tout et votre excellence ne risque rien en délivrant des passeports à tous les grecs qui désirent me joindre et retourner dans leurs pays. Un refus de votre part pourrait occasioner des troubles: avant tout il faut que Sa Majesté L’Empereur ne soit pas compromis, et c’est d’après cela que

8. G. L. Arsh, *Tainoe obshchestvo ...*, *op. cit.*: 69, 96-100. For information on the common knowledge of Greek activities in Kishinev, see A. Shik, *Odesskii Pushkin* (Paris: Dom Knigi, 1938): 11. B. A. Trubetskoi, “Kishinevskie znakomye Pushkina,” in *Pushkin na iuge* (Kishinev, 1958): 57-63. L. N. Oganian in his article “K voprosu ob otnoshenii A.S. Pushkina k Geterii,” in the same volume (pp. 133-145) gives details of the financial support being accumulated for the Greeks in Kishinev and of Pushkin’s knowledge of preparations for an uprising during his exile in the south. In a letter to P. A. Viazemskii, he wrote “As to the fate of the Greeks, it is very much the same as my brothers the Negroes, and one can only hope that both will be liberated from slavery.” Gilbert Bodinier, *Dictionnaire des officiers de l’armée royale qui ont combattu aux États-Unis pendant la guerre d’Indépendance* (Vincennes, Service historique de l’armée de terre, 1982): 7-8 affirms Langeron’s membership in the Masons.

9. Yeames to Castlereagh, Odessa, March 16/28, 1821, Public Records Office (PRO), Foreign Office (FO) 181 (Constantinople, 1821, Embassy papers), draft # 44. See also in *Le Moniteur universel*, 109 (April 19, 1821).

10. MAE, Correspondance consulaire, Odessa, 1821-1824, vol. 3, A. A. Challaye to Pasquier, March 12, 1821. Later Challaye wrote Pasquier, April 26, that he was present at Langeron’s quarters to read the despatches sent by Stroganov from Constantinople.

votre excellence doit agir. Personne ne doit savoir que vous m'avez écrit et que j'ai répondu a votre excellence."¹¹

Langeron, accordingly, continued to issue passports to Greeks and other nominally Ottoman subjects wanting to go to Moldavia to fight and did nothing to stop the material assistance given the Greeks by people in both the civilian and military sectors. Finally, on March 15/27, the Minister of Interior, V. P. Kochubei, sent a strong note to Langeron ordering him to stop the issuing of passports to people who were, after all, "intent on participating in a revolt." In April the Comte was ordered to erect a quarantine barrier along the Pruth in order to stop the movement of Greeks and their weapons.¹²

One of the reasons for the policy of benign neglect toward the Greeks up to 1820 came because of the failure of the court in St. Petersburg to communicate in a timely manner the changing thinking of Alexander I, who said one time he could not stop merchants from doing their business. Neither Langeron nor Inzov had access to the outgoing messages to Ambassador G. A. Stroganov in Constantinople or to the Russian Consul A. A. Pini sent by Capo d'Istria in January 1820 detailing the changes in Russian foreign policy. Instead, they took their lead from the tolerance shown by the court three years earlier to Nicholas Galatis and the material support extended by the court to various Greek delegations appearing before the Tsar asking for assistance. In addition, the traditional Russian policy since Kuchuk-Kainardji (1774) of defending the Orthodox co-religionists remained intact, as did the perennial suspicion of the Turks. Capo d'Istria had worked closely with Langeron in the promotion of Greek commercial activities, and it is not surprising that Ypsilanti, who was well placed would carry with him — in the absence of precise official imperial permission — the aura of legitimacy.

But the fact remained that the policy had changed, and that Langeron was caught on the wrong side of the curve. In April he received a letter from Nesselrode dated April 14/26 from Laibach via the Russian Consul Andrei Pisani in Iasi. Nesselrode pointed out that the Tsar knew of Ypsilanti's letter to Langeron, but wanted to know what Langeron had written to the Greek leader on February 24.

“[Sa Majesté] me charge donc de m'adresser directement à Vous, Mr le Comte, pour vous demander quelques explications à ce sujet. Ce que l'Empereur désirois surtout, c'est de savoir ce qui a pu vous porter à écrire au Prince Ypsilanti. Sa conduite annonçoit trop évidemment le plus coupable oubli de tous les devoirs que lui imposois le service de notre Auguste Maître et son entreprise étoit trop contraire aux principes que Sa Majesté se fait gloire de professer dans ses rapports politiques avec toutes les puissances sans distinctions, pour que vous n'eussiez pu prévoir qu'elle serois frappée de la plus complète désapprobation.”

11. Ypsilanti to Langeron, February 26/March 10, 1821, Arkhiv vneshnei politiki Rossiiskoi Imperii (AVPRI), *fond* (f.) Kantseliariia, 1821, *opis'* (op.) 468, *delo* (d.) 5939, letter # 25, annex # 3566.

12. G. L. Arsh, *Eteristskoe...*, *op. cit.*: 310.

Langeron was ordered to stop all contact with Ypsilanti and to send a copy of the letter he had written to him and “itérativement de ne vous écarter sous aucun prétexte quelconque de la ligne de conduite qu’elle vous a fait trouver par son Ministère des affaires étrangères.”¹³

On April 24/May 6, Langeron responded to Nesselrode in a letter marked “official and secret.” After listing the various couriers who had gone through Odessa, he wrote “Cependant je ne puis plus tarder de répondre à la confiance de notre Auguste Souverain, et de vous instruire en détail des commencements et des progrès de l’insurrection des Grecques en ce qui concerne Odessa.”¹⁴ He wrote that it appeared to him that “Ils paraissaient persuadés que les projets de leurs compatriotes étaient, sinon approuvés ouvertement, au moins tolérés tacitement par notre gouvernement.” Further, at the beginning, “[...] les projets des grecs n’offraient aucun danger pour le gouvernement.” As he spelled out his understanding of the progress of the conspiracy and his attitude toward it, he became more strident in his tone. This change in attitude can also be explained by the workload he labored under. He personally read the intercepted letters to local Greeks and local consuls and served as his own copyist.¹⁵

On April 28/May 10, Langeron sent Nesselrode a fuller explanation of his conduct. In another note marked “official and secret,” he wrote of his great sadness at the unhappiness of the Tsar in regards to the letter he wrote to Ypsilanti. After noting that he had already responded to the initial demands for explanations on April 24, he gave more background to his dealings with Ypsilanti.

“Le Prince [...] avait passé à Odessa tout l’été avec sa mère et ses frères. Je l’avais beaucoup vu et même je m’étais lié avec lui. Sa conduite ici était très sage et très réservée [...] il est ensuite parti pour Kischinew. Dans le mois de février, un grand nombre de grecs, sujets turcs, m’ont demandé des passeports pour la Moldavie, sous prétexte d’affaires de commerce. Je ne pouvais le refuser.”

He related that once he learned of the events in the Principalities,

“j’ai écrit au Prince Ypsilanti que je croyai encore à Kischinew, et j’ai envoyé ma lettre par Mr le général Inzov. Ce n’était pas une lettre officielle. C’était même plutôt un billet qu’une lettre [...]. Je lui demandais [...] quels étaient les rassemblemens qu’il faisait et comment et par qui il y était autorisé.”

The despatch to Nesselrode ended with a plaintive expression of disappointment at being misused.¹⁶

13. Nesselrode to Langeron, April 14/26, 1821, AVPRI, f. Kantseliariia, op. 468, d. 5940, # 30, letter # 3301.

14. Langeron to Nesselrode, April 24/May 6, 1821, AVPRI, f. Kantseliariia, 1821, op. 468, d. 5939, # 20-23, letter # 3566.

15. *Ibid.*, letter # 3572.

16. Langeron to Nesselrode, April 28/May 10, 1821, AVPRI, f. Kantseliariia, 1821, op. 468, d. 5939, letter # 3574.

Langeron's explanations proved sufficient to save his position, but he never forgave Ypsilanti and his friends for their perfidy. In a footnote to his manuscript memoirs inserted in 1824, he wrote that

“En 1820, lors du désastre de toutes ces familles [...] causé par la révolution des Grecs de la Morée et l'extravagante entreprise du Prince Ipsilanti en Moldavie, les individus qui purent échapper à la mort, se sauvèrent en grande partie à Odessa. J'avais alors, comme gouverneur général de la Nouvelle Russie, ma résidence dans cette ville. Je les accueillis et leur donnai tous les secours que l'humanité réclamait; mais la connaissance plus intime que je fis de ces fanariottes me confirma dans l'opinion que j'en avais depuis longtemps.”

But he reserved his strongest language for Ypsilanti, whom he characterized as without any positive qualities in 1827. “Son sort n'intéressait personne: il était fort au dessous de ses projets et n'avait aucune qualité qui doit caractériser un chef de parti.”¹⁷ His vindictiveness at that time, after he had been chosen to be one of the judges in the Decembrists hearings, showed a change of opinion, but his enthusiastic, if “naïve”, cooperation with the Greeks leads one to wonder if he was not protecting himself in his note from the judgements of future, and he probably thought, more conservative, critics.

Once he had survived the questions of “what did you know and when did you know it,” Langeron spent the rest of 1821 in his exhausting schedule expanded to include the monitoring of all of the information that came through Odessa and keeping the channels open to Ambassador Stroganov in Constantinople and to the Consuls throughout the Balkans. He paid special attention to the activities of the British Consulate in Odessa, and finally he had to supervise the funeral of the martyred Patriarch Gregory at the end of June.

During the first six months of the Greek crisis the Russians and the British found themselves at odds over a number of questions in Constantinople. The Russians believed that the British dominated the Sultan and the British perceived there was a Russian movement against their interests in the Eastern Mediterranean. They were both right. For Langeron, there was no doubt who the real enemy at that time was, it was England personified by its Ambassador in Constantinople Lord Strangford.

As he wrote Nesselrode in an “official and very secret” letter from Odessa on June 6/18

“Les relations secrètes que j'ai avec les négociants, m'ont appris depuis longtemps que le Cabinet de St. James était le moteur qui dirigeait dans ce moment la politique insensée des Turcs. Ce cabinet [est] l'ennemie de la russie dans cette circonstance comme dans toutes celles ou sont intérêts mercantiles [...]”

17. MAE, Mémoires et documents, Russie, 23: 14, 37.

He went on to charge that the British were Russia's enemies in Constantinople and that

“Lord Strangford est un agent très actif, très perfide, très adroit qui non seulement est mu par les instructions et les intentions de son gouvernement, mais encore par une inimitié personnelle mais cachée pour Mr le Baron Stroganov.”

In the same note he also reported the rumors carried by the merchants of the increasingly hostile behavior of the English Consul, Mr. James Yeames, “bien différent de son père mort depuis un an et demi.”¹⁸

Langeron had good reason to suspect Yeames. In a despatch dated June 7/19, Yeames noted that

“a Swedish vessel came in on the evening of 5/17 instant, bearing despatches from Baron Stroganov which were forwarded without loss of time by an officer to St. Petersburg. Having reason to suppose from what was dropt at the time that the purpose of the despatches was of a highly interesting nature, I availed myself of an opportunity and succeeded in gaining full knowledge of them. The shortage of time confined my attention to the general tenor [...]. My authority is of the most positive and undeniable kind, and I venture to claim complete reliance on it [...].”

Yeames also forwarded a copy of this to Strangford in Constantinople of “a proclamation published by the Governor of Odessa on the 6/18 ultimo; the effect of which has been to excite the greatest alarm at that place and to confirm the apprehension of a rupture between Russia and the Porte.” War fever abounded in Odessa, as Langeron was telling the Consuls that he expected news of a Russian declaration of war on the Turks to arrive at any time.¹⁹

A review of the Yeames papers at the Public Records Office, London both those of the father Henry Savage Yeames and the son James shows them to have been effective, though badly paid, servants of the King. However there is a distinct shift in the tone of the reports to justify Langeron's suspicions. The father's reports dealt strictly with trade matters, and the almost annual requests for a salary increase. He wrote convincingly of Odessa's promises as a port, comparing it with Marseilles, Genoa, and Trieste. But once Ypsilanti began his work in the Principalities, there was a notable change.

James Yeames reported to Castlereagh from Odessa May 12/24, 1821 that

“when the present troubles broke out in Moldavia, with their accompanying circumstances on this side of the frontier, I knew not how far I could venture to communicate directly with Your Lordship on this subject. I did not hesitate,

18. Langeron to Nesselrode, June 6/18, 1821, AVPRI, f. Kantseliaria, op. 468, d. 5939, # 106-107, letter # 3979. For another angle on this question see the despatch in *Le Moniteur universel*, 210 (July 30, 1821).

19. Yeames to Castlereagh, Odessa, June 7/19, 1821, PRO, FO 181, # 45. Also, Strangford to Castlereagh, Constantinople, July 2, 1821, PRO, FO 181, # 61.

however, giving the earliest information at St. Petersburg and Constantinople; and have ever since continued by this particular desire to transmit as circumstantial account as possible, of all the subsequent events as they happened on either side of the frontier, within the compass of my own observation and of my means of intelligence.”²⁰

In addition, Yeames served the intelligence needs of Lord Strangford, such as in May when the British Ambassador in Constantinople asked him to “obtain for me any accurate information respecting Sebastopol — whether any preparations are going on there and to what extent.”²¹

Strangford had arrived in Constantinople in February, when Stroganov still exercised a strong influence. The Sultan received him well, seeing a chance to offset the dominance of the Russians, and offered him the finest palaces for his residence, in contrast to what had been given the Russians. By August, *Le Moniteur universel* reported that so great was his influence in Constantinople that some maintained that changes in the Turkish capital were thought to be the result of his influence.²²

Yeames’ functions as a communications intermediary can also be seen in a note to him from the British Ambassador to Russia, Charles Bagot.²³ He warned Yeames that “I must request that you will continue to keep me informed of what is happening in your neighbourhood, but I say, bear in mind that when you write by the post our letters are seen by other eyes than mine.”²⁴

In July Langeron wrote Nesselrode of a secret letter from Stroganov, “qu’il me recommande de brûler. ” The Baron wrote of his fears of being imprisoned in the Seven Towers, of the presence of Turkish spies in Odessa, including “Mr Yeames qui est ici le premier et le dangereux espion des Turcs.”²⁵

Langeron, through a variety of means, gained access to most of Yeames’ correspondence. Along with intercepting the mail and diplomatic correspondence for his own perusal, he also was given permission to read the despatches sent from St. Petersburg to Stroganov, proof to him that he had escaped the censure implicit in his contact with Ypsilanti.²⁶

He maintained his suspicious of Yeames, even when in July the Consul apparently tied to make a rapprochement. He wrote Nesselrode that “le consul d’Angleterre a subitement changé de couleur depuis 4 jours. Soit pour mieux cacher

20. Yeames to Castlereagh, Odessa, May 12/24, 1821, PRO, FO 65 (Russia: Consuls Bayley and Yeames. Foreign and various), # 130.

21. Strangford to Yeames, Constantinople, May 9, 1821, PRO, FO 257 (Embassy and consular archives: Odessa), folder # 1.

22. See articles in *Le Moniteur universel*, 188 (June 4, 1821) and 219 (August 7, 1821).

23. Bagot to Yeames, St. Petersburg, July 19/31, 1821, PRO, FO 257, folder # 1.

24. Bagot to Yeames, St. Petersburg, August 4/16, 1821, PRO, FO 257, folder # 1.

25. Langeron to Nesselrode, June 12/24, 1821, AVPRI, f. Kantseliariia, 1821, op. 468, d. 5939, # 128-129, letter # 3979.

26. Langeron to Nesselrode, July 1/13, 1821, AVPRI, f. Kantseliariia, 1821, op. 468, d. 5939, # 148-149, letter # 8294.

son jeu, soit par les ordres de Lord Strangford [...].”²⁷ who had effectively outflanked the Russian embassy in Constantinople and isolated Stroganov.

Stroganov’s effectiveness as an Ambassador to the Porte during this time, after a long line of relatively ineffective Russian representatives, is open to question. On the one hand he had the difficult position of assuring the Turks that the Russians had nothing to do with the Greek uprising, even before receiving guidance to that effect from St. Petersburg and despite his sympathy for the Greek cause. He had to defend the rights of Russian ships which were stopped on the high seas by the Turks and work to open the Straits for Russian grain to pass to the Mediterranean. While condemning the revolt, Stroganov had to uphold the right gained at Kuchuk-Kainardji to defend Russia’s co-religionists, a difficult topic after the murder of the Patriarch Gregory on Easter Sunday. As the conflicts became more open — such as when the Porte demanded that all Greeks living in Russia be extradited, Stroganov became more aggressive.

On the other hand, the Russian Embassy had not asked for an audience with the Sultan for nearly five years before the outbreak of the revolution, refused to comply with local police arrangements, made threatening noise over the Porte’s slowness in fulfilling the requirements of the Bucharest Treaty (1812), and made vehement and insulting demands to the Sultan. The Russians in general felt justified in doing this because of Russia’s pre-eminence in Europe and Stroganov was emboldened to speak strongly because of his closeness to the Tsar who from Laibach in April had given him increased stature.

For all of this in the early summer of 1821 he could not stop the Turks from imprisoning Emmanuel Danesi, the Embassy’s banker and could not convince the Turks to open up the Dardanelles to Russian commerce. After June 10, he shut down all communications with the Turkish government and withdrew to Buyukdere with his family and staff where he spent the next seven weeks in virtual house arrest. Finally an ultimatum from the Tsar, drafted by Capo d’Istria who was in Vienna, arrived on July 19 stating that if the Orthodox believers were not protected — invoking Kuchuk-Kainardji — Russia would take military action within eight days of the document’s receipt. The 100,000 strong Russian forces under General Wittgenstein were placed on alert along the Pruth. On July 27 the Porte said it was unable to reply, but there would be a written answer in three days. Stroganov chose to break relations and left for Odessa with the first south wind.²⁸

Stroganov’s position was difficult and he was effectively trapped in a corner. But there can also be no doubt that Strangford effectively undermined him, and his return to Russia at the beginning of August pleased the British envoy. “Baron Stroganov’s departure from Constantinople was an unexpected asset and is disapproved of by the Austrian government,”²⁹ he wrote. Subsequently, Strangford

27. Langeron to Nesselrode, July 20/August 1, 1821, AVPRI, f. Kantseliariia, 1821, op. 468, d. 5939, # 162, letter # 8700.

28. B. Jelavich, *op. cit.*: 57-60.

29. Strangford to Castlereagh, Constantinople, via Vienna, August 16, 1821, PRO, FO 181, # 81.

adopted a hurt tone to deal with the charges made against him by Stroganov. In response to the outraged protests of the former Russian Ambassador and Langeron regarding his behavior, Strangford responded to the angry rhetoric in “which the Russian minister considers himself authorized to indulge.”³⁰

Stroganov arrived in Odessa August 2/14, but because of the rules of the quarantine, he could not leave for St. Petersburg until September 1/13. During that time James Yeames sought an interview with him, the angry nature of which he reported to Bagot. In October, Bagot responded:

“I am obliged to you for the copy which you sent me of your correspondence with Lord Strangford upon the subject of the strange conversation which Baron Stroganov thought fit to hold with you in Odessa. I can only admire your prudent conduct in sustaining as you did so violent and unwarranted an attack.”³¹

Even after the initial war threat had been resolved when the Russians chose not to send their armies into battle, and relations between the English and the Russians lost some of the tension that had been implicit for some time, Langeron continued to be suspicious. He wrote in September, after thirty-three days of no news from Constantinople that a south wind brought nearly 30 boats — including some English — to the port of Odessa. He noted, a bit sarcastically, that now that the Greek revolutionaries were suppressed, the English had trouble convincing the Turks to pay acceptable prices for imported goods. Later that month he reported on intercepted despatches from Hannover for Lord Strangford.³²

Bagot had an audience with the Tsar in September, responding to the August 5 protests of the Russian Ambassador Lieven, in the United Kingdom, over the charges that Strangford had worked consistently against Russian interests in general and Stroganov in particular. Bagot reported that he had satisfactorily “furnished the most undeniable of good will and anxious zeal of which H.M.’s ambassador at Constantinople had really labored to assist the Russian views and objectives.” The Tsar, Bagot reported, had responded that “[...] it was sufficient that the two governments understand each other.”³³

By the end of the year, events had calmed down in Odessa, and Langeron’s participation in the Greek Question declined to the occasional response to a petition from a Greek merchant for support for a particular commercial enterprise. He continued to lobby for humane treatment of refugees coming from the war zones of the revolution and to keep a wary eye on Mr. Yeames.

He would leave his position in Southwest Russia a little more than a year later on grounds of ill health, and would return to Paris to arrange his papers and look after

30. Strangford to Castlereagh, Constantinople, August 6, 1821, PRO, FO 181, # 82.

31. Bagot to Yeames, St. Petersburg, October 10/22, 1821, PRO, FO 257, # 1.

32. Langeron to Nesselrode, September 8/20, 1821, AVPRI, f. Kantseliariia, op. 468, d. 5939, # 198-199, letter # 9172.

33. Bagot to Castlereagh, St. Petersburg, September 5/17, 1821, PRO, FO 181, #44/45.

his family's property. He would return to Russia at the invitation of Nicholas I in 1825 where he would serve as one of the members of the panel investigating the Decembrist uprising. Two years later he participated in the final act of the Greek Revolution, leading the Russian forces in the Russo-Turkish War.

The Comte showed a considerable degree of survival skills in navigating the dangerous reefs of the Greek Question in 1821. He had not been made aware of the policy shifts toward the Balkans at the beginning of 1820, and continued to serve his sovereign in the manner he believed to be advantageous for the Empire. He overcame his innate dislike of the Greeks because he saw them to be useful in the building of Southwest Russia. As long as he believed that the Tsar favored the plans of the *Philike Hetairia* he rendered subtle and effective assistance both through the granting of passports and by turning a blind eye to their preparations. The moment it became clear that the Tsar did not approve of Ypsilanti's plans, he effectively shut the borders, while rendering assistance to the refugees from the fighting.

Langeron's role in the Greek Question was to try to fulfill his duties as he saw them in carrying out the historically muddled tsarist policies toward the Balkans, such as when Alexander let his ultimatum fall to the ground as the Turks did little to respond to its basic issues. The tsar chose to use restraint, maintain the European alliance, rather than fight alone for the Greeks, and thereby — in his eyes — encourage revolutionaries everywhere.

In a footnote to his manuscripts added in 1827, however, Langeron had moderated his views somewhat. "Maintenant un nouveau jour semble se lever pour les Grecs..." He added that before a final judgement could be made, the results of the Greek Revolution and its aftermath would have to be evaluated. "Je fais des voeux pour eux, je voudrais pouvoir contribuer à leur rendre la liberté, dont quelques-uns paraissent être dignes, mais je les connais trop pour espérer une régénération complète; je crains plus pour les Grecs, les Grecs eux mêmes que les Turcs."³⁴

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34. MAE, Mémoires et documents, Russie, 23: 12, 14.