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THE AMBASSADOR'S RIGHT-HAND MAN: TERRICK HAMILTON AT THE PORTE

THEOPHILUS C. PROUSIS

These vivid comments by Terrick Hamilton, secretary at the British embassy in Constantinople during the ambassadorship of Lord Strangford, evoked the escalating crisis that engulfed the Ottoman realm in the early 1820s. At a tense but pivotal moment in Ottoman history, the Empire of Sultan Mahmud II faced daunting internal and external pressures triggered by war, revolt, sectarian strife, the erosion of effective ruling institutions, and European penetration. The Greek insurrection against the Sublime Porte broke out in 1821 in the Danubian Principalities, the Peloponnese, and other Greek-inhabited areas, morphing into a prolonged and costly conflict between Ottoman troops and Greek rebels on both land and sea. War between Russia and Turkey loomed, largely over Ottoman actions that abrogated Russian–Ottoman treaty stipulations, including agreements that protected Greek Christians from Ottoman reprisals. Ottoman restrictions on shipping disrupted European trade in the Black Sea and the Levant, which in turn fueled an upsurge in piracy against Ottoman and European commercial navigation.¹ Ottoman

1 On the Greek revolt and its consequences, see Virginia H. Aksan, *Ottoman Wars, 1700–1870: An Empire Besieged*. Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2007, 285–305; David Brewer, *The Greek War of Independence: The Struggle for Freedom from Ottoman Oppression and the Birth of the Modern Greek Nation*. Woodstock, N. Y.: Overlook Press, 2003; Petros Pizaniias (ed.), *The Greek Revolution of 1821: A European Event*. Istanbul: Isis Press, 2011; Douglas Dakin, *The Greek Struggle for Independence, 1821–1833*. London: Batsford, 1973. For a recent Russian perspective, see Olga E. Petrunina, *Grecheskaia natsiia i gosudarstvo v XVIII–XX vv.: ocherki politicheskogo razvitiia* (The Greek nation and state in the 18th–20th centuries: studies in political history). Moscow: KDY, 2010, 100–222. On the “war scare” between Russia and Turkey in 1821–22, see Theophilus C. Prousis, *Russian Society and the Greek Revolution*. DeKalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois University Press, 1994, 26–30, 185–187; Idem, *Russian–Ottoman Relations in the Levant: The Dashkov Archive*. (Minnesota Mediterranean and East European Monographs, 10.) Minneapolis: Modern Greek Studies Program, University of Minnesota, 2002, 25–27; Idem, *Lord Strangford at the Sublime Porte (1821): The Eastern Crisis*. Volume 1. Istanbul: Isis Press, 2010, 32–33; Barbara Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements, 1806–1914*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991, 49–75; Irina S. Dostian, *Rossiia i balkanskii vopros* (Russia and the Balkan question). Moscow: Nauka, 1972, 196–238; Anatolii V. Fadeev, *Rossiia i vostochnyi krizis 20-kh godov XIX veka* (Russia and the Eastern crisis of the 1820s). Moscow: Nauka, 1958, 36–91. For disruptions in trade and the

administrative disorder heightened public uncertainty; government factions, janissaries, and regional notables contested the sultan's centralized rule; and border disputes sparked hostility between Turkey and Persia.² Against the backdrop of these intensifying and intertwined challenges, British diplomatic reports from Constantinople chronicled a volatile situation in the Near East.

Lord Strangford conducted arduous negotiations with the Ottoman government during the first two years of his ambassadorship in 1821–22.³ Not only did he represent British interests in the Near East but he interceded for Russia after the

increased danger of piracy in the Levant, see Prousis, *Lord Strangford at the Sublime Porte (1821)*, 28–32; Idem, *British Consular Reports from the Ottoman Levant in an Age of Upheaval, 1815–1830*. Istanbul: Isis Press, 2008, 33–36; Daniel Panzac, *Barbary Corsairs: The End of a Legend, 1800–1820*. Victoria Hobson (tr.), completed by John E. Hawkes. Leiden: Brill, 2005; Elena Frangakis-Syrett, *The Commerce of Smyrna in the Eighteenth Century (1700–1820)*. Athens: Centre for Asia Minor Studies, 1992, 70–74, 108–110.

- 2 On the administrative, institutional, and other challenges that destabilized and thus restructured the Ottoman Empire during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, see Aksan, *Ottoman Wars, 1700–1870*, 180–342; Caroline Finkel, *Osman's Dream: The Story of the Ottoman Empire, 1300–1923*. New York: Basic Books, 2005, 289–446; Suraiya Faroqhi (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Turkey. Vol. 3, The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603–1839*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006, 81–117, 135–206; Frederick F. Anscombe (ed.), *The Ottoman Balkans, 1750–1830*. Princeton, N. J.: Markus Wiener Publications, 2006; Fikret Adanir – Suraiya Faroqhi (eds.), *The Ottomans and the Balkans: A Discussion of Historiography*. Leiden: Brill, 2002. On the Turkish–Persian War of 1821–1823, which diverted Ottoman troops to the eastern frontier and thus helped Greek rebels in the initial stages of their insurrection, see Graham Williamson, 'The Turko–Persian War of 1821–1823: Winning the War but Losing the Peace', in Roxane Farmanfarmanian (ed.), *War and Peace in Qajar Persia: Implications Past and Present*. New York: Routledge, 2008, 88–109.
- 3 On Strangford's persistent efforts in 1821–22, see his published dispatches to the London Foreign Office in Prousis, *Lord Strangford at the Sublime Porte (1821)* and Idem, *Lord Strangford at the Sublime Porte (1822): The Eastern Crisis*. Volume 2. Istanbul: Isis Press, 2012. Excerpts from these reports appear in Idem, 'Eastern Orthodoxy under Siege in the Ottoman Levant: A View from Constantinople in 1821', *Modern Greek Studies Yearbook* 24/25 (2008/2009) 39–72; Idem, 'British Embassy Reports on the Greek Uprising in 1821–1822: War of Independence or War of Religion?', *Archivum Ottomanicum* 28 (2011) 171–222; Idem, 'Revolt, Reprisal, Russian–Ottoman Tension: A British Perspective on the Opening Round of the 1821 Eastern Crisis', *Balkanistica* 26 (2013) 127–160; Allan Cunningham, *Anglo–Ottoman Encounters in the Age of Revolution: Collected Essays*. Edward Ingram (ed.). London: Frank Cass, 1993, 188–222. For the larger context of British policy toward the Greek insurgence and the Ottoman Empire during the era of Lord Castlereagh (foreign secretary until 1822) and George Canning (foreign secretary, 1822–27), see Charles Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Castlereagh, 1815–1822: Britain and the European Alliance*. 2nd ed. London: G. Bell, 1934, 349–386; Harold Temperley, *The Foreign Policy of Canning, 1822–1827: England, the Neo-Holy Alliance, and the New World*. 2nd ed. London: Frank Cass, 1966, 319–326; Wendy Hinde, *George Canning*. London: Collins, 1973, 321–344, 375–389; Charles W. Crawley, *The Question of Greek Independence: A Study of British Policy in the Near East, 1821–1833*. Cambridge, 1930. Reprint, New York: H. Fertig, 1973.

Russian legation severed official relations with Turkey in the summer of 1821. His paramount objectives focused on the evacuation of Ottoman troops from the Danubian Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia, the protection of non-combatant Orthodox Christians, and the removal of Ottoman interference in Black Sea shipping. Above all, he steadfastly sought to defuse the Eastern crisis by averting a Russian–Ottoman war and re-establishing formal diplomatic ties between Russia and Turkey. For this end he repeatedly counseled restraint and leniency on the part of the Ottoman government, advocating reconciliation with Russia and moderation toward the Greek insurgency. By the end of 1822, partial success crowned his painstaking efforts as the sultan ordered the departure of Ottoman troops from the Danubian Principalities and appointed new *hospodars* or governors.⁴ War clouds between Russia and Turkey seemingly passed, and Strangford enjoyed Tsar Alexander I's confidence to resolve outstanding Russian–Ottoman differences, a precondition for the expected return of a Russian ambassador to Constantinople. Indeed, at European great power conferences in Vienna and Verona (September–December 1822), the tsar entrusted Britain's ambassador with the delicate assignment of negotiating with the Porte on behalf of Russia.⁵

As embassy secretary, Hamilton replaced Strangford as chief dispatch-writer when the ambassador traveled to Vienna and Verona for great power discussions on European affairs, including the crisis in the Near East.⁶ Hamilton's impressions and

4 The Danubian Principalities preoccupied and sometimes bedeviled Strangford's negotiations with Ottoman officials. His reports of 1821–22 made abundant reference to this difficult issue, in particular the evacuation of Ottoman troops and the appointment of new *hospodars*. For more on this complex matter, which had direct repercussions on Russian–Ottoman relations, see Christine M. Philliou, *Biography of an Empire: Governing Ottomans in an Age of Revolution*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011, 65–104; Radu R. N. Florescu, *The Struggle against Russia in the Romanian Principalities: A Problem in Anglo-Turkish Diplomacy, 1821–1854*. Iași: The Center for Romanian Studies, 1997, 123–147; Idem, 'Lord Strangford and the Problem of the Danubian Principalities, 1821–24', *Slavonic and East European Review* 39:93 (1966) 472–488.

5 Irby C. Nichols, *The European Pentarchy and the Congress of Verona, 1822*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971, 48–54, 244–258, on the European great power discussions at Vienna and Verona to resolve the Greek affair and other disputes in the Near East. On the impact of the Greek revolt on great power politics and diplomacy: Matthew S. Anderson, *The Eastern Question, 1774–1923*. London: Macmillan, 1966, 1–77; Paul Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics, 1763–1848*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994, 614–621, 637–664; Idem, *Metternich's Diplomacy at Its Zenith, 1820–1823*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1962, 164–194, 223–225.

6 On Hamilton in Constantinople, see Geoff R. Berridge, *British Diplomacy in Turkey, 1583 to the Present: A Study in the Evolution of the Resident Embassy*. Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff, 2009, 55–56. Terrick Hamilton (1781–1876), the youngest of four sons of the vicar of St. Martin-in-the-Fields in London, began his service (probably in 1812) as oriental secretary at the British embassy in the Ottoman capital. Promoted to embassy secretary in 1820, he achieved recognition as an Orientalist for his multi-volume translation of a popular collection of Arabic

observations, echoing the major themes in Strangford's writings to the London Foreign Office, clearly reinforce the importance of British embassy records for exploring the Eastern Question, that precarious web of European intervention, intrigue, and rivalry in the vulnerable but surprisingly resilient Ottoman Empire, which still possessed strategic lands and vital waterways.⁷

Hamilton reported on naval and military clashes in the burgeoning Ottoman–Greek conflict. He shared intelligence from Constantinople, the Danubian Principalities, the Morea, and the Aegean Archipelago. He covered economic and commercial issues, personnel changes and contending factions in the Ottoman government, chronic threats from disorderly janissaries, and unresolved questions in Ottoman–Russian relations.⁸ He explained perhaps the major political change at the Porte in late 1822, the fall from favor of the sultan's influential favorite, Halet Efendi, and the latter's exile and execution.⁹ A crucial concern, the security and

stories about the life and legend of Antar (c.525–c.608), a pre-Islamic poet, warrior, and adventurer in the Arabian Peninsula: *Antar, a Bedouen Romance*, translated from the Arabic by Terrick Hamilton (London: John Murray, 1819–20). The first volume of Hamilton's translation received a very positive review in *The Edinburgh Monthly Review* (January–June 1819): 566–77. The Arab scholar who compiled the Antar tales, Abd al-Malik ibn al-Quraib al-Asmai (c.740–c.828), studied the language and poetic oral culture of Bedouin tribes and authored numerous works in Arabic that contributed to philology, natural science, and animal husbandry.

- 7 The Eastern Question, or the Western Question from the standpoint of the Ottoman government, refers to the complex of feuds and crises in the Near East precipitated by the interplay of three circumstances: first, the Ottoman Empire's military, financial, and institutional weakening; second, the contending claims and objectives of Britain, Russia, and other European great powers; and third, the stirrings of Ottoman Christians, encompassing Greeks, Serbs, Bulgarians, Romanians, Albanians, Arabs, and Armenians, for autonomy and independence. The Eastern Question extended from the late eighteenth century, with Russia's emergence as a Black Sea power and the onset of French revolutionary influence in the Balkans, to the demise of the Ottoman Empire after World War I. The nineteenth century, when the interaction of the three circumstances cited above produced a tangled series of crises and wars, marks the classic phase of this geopolitical problem in European and Near Eastern affairs. The standard account of the Eastern Question remains Anderson, *The Eastern Question*. Useful compilations of primary sources include Idem (ed.), *The Great Powers and the Near East, 1774–1923*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1971, and Alexander Macfie, *The Eastern Question, 1774–1923*. New York: Longman, 1996. For an excellent general account of Imperial Russia's involvement in the Balkans and the Near East: Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements*. For recent trends in the historiography on the Eastern Question, see Frary and Kozelsky's collection of essays by Balkan and Ottoman specialists: Lucien J. Frary – Mara Kozelsky (eds.), *Russian–Ottoman Borderlands: The Eastern Question Reconsidered*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2014.
- 8 Hamilton's writings to the Foreign Office from September through December 1822 appear in Prousis, *Lord Strangford at the Sublime Porte (1822)*, 283–342.
- 9 Strangford commented (see the many references in the two volumes of his published correspondence) on the prominent influence of Mahmud II's close adviser Halet Efendi (Mehmed

flow of British trade in the eastern Mediterranean, prompted frequent commentary. British commerce fell prey not just to “the insolent pretensions of the insurgents” but also to Ottoman restrictions and delays – “the most irrelevant objections...every vexation and absurd pretension to shackle the course of our commercial proceedings.” British commercial interests, according to Hamilton, “had been injured by those who were destined to protect them... No language can sufficiently reprobate such a scandalous and fraudulent proceeding – but any attempt to erase it will be combated with a tenacity and a stubbornness, at least equal to the effrontery and deceit that could have prompted so violent an abandonment of every principle of honesty and integrity...”¹⁰

The range and extent of Hamilton’s coverage can best be seen in his report of 25 September 1822 on the multiple challenges confronting the Ottoman government, from the war against Persia to the fast-spreading Greek uprising. As a result of these disturbances, “[t]here can be no doubt that, at present, an unusual uneasiness pervades all classes of the Turkish nation. Calamities of more than common magnitude press upon them. Their superstition always leads them to attribute to irresistible fatality every peculiar circumstance, good or bad, that effects their situation through life.” They were “thus accustomed, in general, to regard the

Said). Halet supported the sultan’s political drive to restore centralized absolute rule and to curb the powers of provincial notables in Anatolia and the Balkans. In organizing military expeditions against regional chieftains, Halet tried to strengthen his own anti-reform base among the janissaries and their allies and to eliminate contenders for power in the provinces. A target of growing criticism because of his opposition to the sultan’s proposed reforms and because of Ottoman military setbacks in the Peloponnese in 1821, Halet eventually fell from favor. Exiled from the capital, he was executed on the sultan’s orders in late 1822. See Finkel, *Osman’s Dream*, 430–431; Aksan, *Ottoman Wars*, 285–289, 314; Philliou, *Biography of an Empire*, 43–44, 54–59, 75–77, 96–99, 103, 214; Brewer, *The Greek War of Independence*, 103, 109, 166.

10 All of these quotations come from the Hamilton reports published in Prousis, *Lord Strangford at the Sublime Porte (1822)*, 331, 336, 338. The topic of Ottoman restrictions and delays regarding British commerce belongs to the larger story of the capitulations, the capitulatory agreements between the Porte and European powers that heavily influenced commerce, diplomacy, and other facets of Ottoman–European relations. This larger story includes the many irregularities and abuses – committed by Ottoman officials and European merchants and consuls – that became part of the capitulatory system in Ottoman–European commerce. For an overview of the capitulations, with the relevant bibliography: Maurits H. van den Boogert, *The Capitulations and the Ottoman Legal System: Qadis, Consuls, and Beratlis in the 18th Century*. Leiden: Brill, 2005; Idem and Kate Fleet (eds.), *The Ottoman Capitulations: Text and Context*. Rome: Istituto per l’Oriente, 2003. Originally published in *Oriente Moderno* 12/83:3 (2003) 575–714; Prousis, *British Consular Reports from the Ottoman Levant*, 15–22, 103–105, 127–128, 167–168, 229–232. On British capitulations in the Ottoman Empire, also see Jacob C. Hurewitz (ed.), *The Middle East and North Africa in World Politics: A Documentary Record. Vol. 1, European Expansion, 1535–1914*. 2nd ed. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975, 34–41, 189–191.

passing events with the utmost indifference and composure. But in contemplating the variety of ills that now surround them, they indulge the darkest apprehensions and imagine that Providence intends to visit the Ottoman Empire with some awful catastrophe.” Hamilton then itemized a litany of problems undermining the Empire. “The reports of serious troubles in Upper Egypt – the continuance of the revolt in Syria – the dreadful earthquake that has desolated the whole *pashalik* of Aleppo – the predatory incursions of the Persians before whom the Ottoman armies have been obliged to fly – the revolution among their Greek subjects which all the exertions of the Empire have not, as yet, been able to quell.” He also cited “the dilapidated state of [Ottoman] finances,” the drought that affected many regions, and “the spirit of disaffection that prevails amongst the janissaries, rendered more fearful by a corresponding feeling among some of the pashas on the Persian frontier.” Additionally, “the possibility of a Russian war” loomed, as did “the alarming certainty that the powers of Europe are now assembled in congress at Vienna in order to deliberate on the affairs of Turkey.” All of these subjects – “this combination of untoward events” – agitated the discussions of the Divan, preoccupied “the attention of the populace,” and portended “a gloomy prospect for the future”.¹¹

For his able custodianship and supervision of embassy affairs, Hamilton won Strangford’s acclaim when the ambassador returned to the Ottoman capital in January 1823, “after a tedious and in truth, a dangerous passage of thirty-seven days from Trieste.” In his very first report to the Foreign Office after returning, Strangford acknowledged a job well done: “I had the gratification of finding that His Majesty’s affairs and those of his subjects in the Levant, had been conducted during my absence, by Mr. Terrick Hamilton[,] in such a manner as to have merited and to have acquired universal approbation. The Turkish government has expressed its satisfaction in the most proper and becoming terms.”¹²

The documents presented below, all of them from Hamilton to Foreign Secretary George Canning, reveal the advantages and limitations of primary sources written by Europeans in the Islamic Ottoman world. The passages clearly suggest the treasure trove of underutilized material on Ottoman affairs available in British and other European archives. Ambassadors and embassy secretaries relied on various channels of information, gathering intelligence from consuls, merchants, travelers, protégés, agents, and *dragomans* or interpreters; from high-ranking as well as local Ottoman officials; and from other European diplomats. These diverse accounts allowed dispatch-writers to address, not just the most pressing realities in Constantinople, but a range of topics beyond the confines of the capital. Given the British ambassador’s

11 Prousis, *Lord Strangford at the Sublime Porte (1822)*, 292–293. The Divan, the Ottoman council of state presided over by the grand vizier.

12 TNA, FO 78/114, ff. 1–5a, 25 January 1823 (No. 1).

contacts with highly placed authorities in the central government and his knowledge of their sustained debates, the correspondence of his secretary indicates how Ottoman officialdom perceived and reacted to the ongoing Greek insurrection and to the unstable impasse in Russian–Ottoman relations. Not only did Hamilton recount the viewpoints of Ottoman ministers but he voiced his own responses to the contested matters under discussion. Rich in texture and detail, these snapshots related specific incidents and evoked the human drama at the grassroots level of Ottoman society. The very specificity and urgency of these documents deepens our understanding of some of the problems in the sultan’s diminished but enduring Empire.

To be sure, Hamilton’s communiqués echoed conventional Western views of the Ottoman Empire, perceptions that stigmatized the Ottoman “other” with occasional distortion, bias, and exaggeration. European ambassadors, consuls, and embassy staff – not just British representatives – often portrayed Ottoman officialdom in a negative light, accenting episodes of abuse and oppression by pashas, janissaries, and customs officers. Through anecdote and choice of words, Western records alluded to prevalent European images of the Ottoman Empire, fast approaching what became known as “the sick man of Europe” in Western political discourse and public opinion.¹³ Because these commentaries, much like Hamilton’s, often described rapidly unfolding happenings in a fragmentary manner, they lacked sufficient perspective for a fuller picture or a more elaborate analysis. Despite these flaws, the featured documents from Strangford’s top assistant or right-hand man underscore the essential value of British and other Western archival resources for investigating the issues that marked an age of upheaval in the Ottoman Levant.

The five selected reports by Hamilton, from late 1822 and early 1823, are located in the Foreign Office holdings of The National Archives, Kew (TNA, FO). In most cases of wording, grammar, syntax, and punctuation, I have retained the original format, including archaisms and inconsistencies. All explanatory material in brackets is mine. For each selection, introduced with a Roman numeral, I have specified folio numbers, date of completion, and numerical sequence in that particular archival collection.¹⁴

13 On European perceptions and impressions of the Ottoman Empire in the early nineteenth century: Filiz Turhan, *The Other Empire: British Romantic Writings about the Ottoman Empire*. New York: Routledge, 2003; Christine Laidlaw, *The British in the Levant: Trade and Perceptions of the Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth Century*. New York: Tauris, 2010; Allan Cunningham, *Eastern Questions in the Nineteenth Century: Collected Essays*. Edward Ingram (ed.). London: Frank Cass, 1993, 72–107.

14 The entire documents for the passages presented in selections I, II, III, IV, and V are in Prousis, *Lord Strangford at the Sublime Porte (1822)* and Idem, *Lord Strangford at the Sublime Porte (1823): The Eastern Crisis*. Volume 3. Istanbul: Isis Press, 2014.

I. TNA, FO 78/111, ff. 107–09a, 9 November 1822 (No. 16)

[Hamilton to Canning re: the threat posed by recalcitrant janissaries.]

...There can be no doubt but that the greatest dissatisfaction exists among the corps of janissaries. Many of their most respectable chiefs have been banished, and some put to death – and though the condescension of the sultan has from time to time the effect of allaying the irritation, yet the feeling of insubordination is too deeply rooted, and the causes of anger and distrust are of too important a nature, for the expectation of any sincerity in their wishes to conciliate the favour of the sovereign, or in their professions of obedience. In their estimation, any attempt on the part of the sultan to revive the *Nizam-i Cedid* [New Order army] dissolves their allegiance – and as His Highness (it is so believed) is resolved on effecting this change in the discipline of his armies, the janissaries on the other hand are equally determined in their opposition to a measure which would destroy their authority forever.¹⁵

Under such conflicting circumstances, it is not surprising that frequent discussions arise between the sultan and his subjects; active and energetic measures on the part of the government generally produce a temporary calm – till some new turn of affairs creates a renewal of these unfortunate occurrences.

For some days past, the town has been considerably agitated, more indeed by the busy excitors of unnecessary apprehension than by any acts of violence on the part of the people. Many persons have expressed the greatest alarms in the fullest persuasion that a revolution would be the inevitable consequence of the present state of affairs. The janissaries were reported to have broken out in open rebellion – to have forcibly released some of their imprisoned comrades – to have sent the strongest messages to the sultan... [T]he spirit that meditates deeds of outrage works in secret – and when complaints are openly made, they are more frequently redressed – or some means are devised to calm the angry feelings they excite. It would argue too much supineness and stupidity even in this government, to suppose that discontent, when so notorious, should be allowed to ripen into revolt – or that when warned, it would not be sufficiently alive to its own interests, as not to feel the

15 The New Order, or the new army and military organization introduced by Sultan Selim III (1789–1807) and disbanded after his overthrow by the janissaries, inspired the reform aspirations of Mahmud II (1808–39). On the New Order, and the janissary threats faced by these two reform-minded sultans, see Stanford J. Shaw, *Between Old and New: The Ottoman Empire under Sultan Selim III, 1789–1807*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971; Aksan, *Ottoman Wars*, 180–342; Philliou, *Biography of an Empire*, 42–55 *passim*, 76–81, 96–99, 103–106, 198–201, 214–215, 222–223; Godfrey Goodwin, *The Janissaries*. London: Saqi, 1997.

necessity of exertion at so urgent a crisis – and to stifle such commotions ere their birth by the timely application of bribery or the bowstring. Such has generally been the case on similar occasions – but at the same time, it must be admitted, that in a country where the people [are] alternately slave and master, and the government at once obstinate and capricious, the most preposterous contradictions are reconciled, and the wildest speculations are relieved of their extravagance and absurdity...

II. TNA, FO 78/111, ff. 142–44a, 30 November 1822 (No. 24)

[Hamilton to Canning re: the status quo in Ottoman affairs after the exile of Halet Efendi and the confiscation of Halet's property.]

...No alteration in the measures of this government is as yet perceptible. The same principles guide both its foreign and domestic policy, and whatever may be its future views, it is equally difficult to anticipate them as to investigate with any precision the immediate cause of the occurrences that have driven Halet Efendi from his exalted station. The sultan himself appears to be the sole director of affairs, and until orders are issued from the Seraglio [imperial residence of the sultans], the ministers refuse to act, and even hesitate to give an opinion. The chief persons who continue in office are the creatures of Halet Efendi, and appointed by him to their several departments – and it would be rash even to hazard a presumption that anyone in particular enjoys the favour or confidence of the sovereign. It is, moreover, natural to suppose that the present state of things will not last long – and that if men of ability really exist in the Empire, they will be called from their retreat to fill those high and important situations now occupied by individuals whose mediocrity of talent and insignificance of character can never command the respect of the people, nor infuse that spirit and vigour into the conduct of public affairs, which the urgency of the moment and the acknowledged difficulties of the country require – but it is not venturing too far to suppose, that the delay in new modelling the government may arise from an unwillingness in the sultan that it should be imagined that he was intimidated into the late concessions either by the murmurs of his subjects or the influence of foreign suggestion; and until time shall have removed the shadow of such a supposition, and his dignity be entirely cleared from such a suspicion, and until by a temporary adherence to his former policy, he shall have proved to the country and to Europe that he was only prompted to the execution of this energetic measure by his own conviction of its necessity, and that insensible to threats and shrinking with disgust from all unsolicited interference, he stands alone, the guardian of the Empire, and the arbiter of its fate – it will be sufficient to watch the progress of the administration towards improvement, and to hope that by the gradual adoption of suitable and salutary changes, an ameliorated system may be introduced and finally established.

The sequestration of the property of Halet Efendi, and of the persons in his immediate service, will probably be soon followed by his execution. It was believed by some that his head had actually been brought to Constantinople. A vast quantity of rich furniture of various sorts has been removed from his houses – and it is said

that the Jew broker Haskel has been put to the torture to draw from him the disclosure of the immense wealth Halet is supposed to have amassed.¹⁶ But Halet never had the character of an avaricious man; he may have extorted enormous sums either for his own use or to supply the sultan's coffers, but he was of too liberal a disposition, and too fond of expence, to have hoarded up treasures through a love of money. The government, however, is at all times happy to avail itself of such an opportunity of enriching itself under any supposition – and it can feel no compunction in applying to its own purposes the resources of an opulent Jew...

III. TNA, FO 78/111, ff. 146–54a, 6 December 1822 (No. 25)

[Hamilton to Canning re: the death of Halet Efendi and the public's reaction to this event.¹⁷]

...On the 4th of this month, the head of Halet Efendi was exposed to public view...This exhibition has excited the deepest interest in the capital. The concurrence of people assembled round the head of this once powerful favourite was immense, and the exultation of the populace at this disgraceful termination of Halet's career was augmented by a feeling of triumph at the success of those intrigues which had accomplished the downfall of a man generally accused of being the cause of all the present distresses of the Empire.

At the same time, it may be added that amongst the higher and more respectable classes, not immediately concerned in this event, and particularly amongst the Christian inhabitants, it is easy to observe sentiments of a different nature. For many years past, there has scarcely been an example of the execution of an Ottoman minister so eminent for his talents, and so distinguished by the high offices to which he has been raised. The violent death of Benderli Ali Pasha, who was grand vizier for a few days last year [1821], forms almost the only exception to the more merciful measures and more dignified conduct of the later sultans towards those servants who have incurred their displeasure, and been visited with proofs of their resentment – unless in cases of treason and open rebellion.¹⁸

It is not therefore without surprise, that the revival of these sanguinary proceedings has been thus publicly witnessed – and a feeling, not far removed from disgust, has been very unequivocally expressed on this particular occasion, arising from the fact that Halet Efendi is not even accused in the label affixed to his head of having committed any crime to justify this fatal deed – and as it is notorious that these papers always contain exaggerated statements of the offender's guilt, it is

16 On Halet Efendi's Jewish banker Haskel (Hezekiel), see Philliou, *Biography of an Empire*, 57, 207, 214; Prousis, *Lord Strangford at the Sublime Porte (1822)*, 323, 339.

17 For more on Halet's disgrace and death, *ibid.*, 316–320, 323–329.

18 On the dismissal and execution of Benderli Ali Pasha: *Idem*, *Lord Strangford at the Sublime Porte (1821)*, 73, 77, 82–83, 126.

reasonable to suppose that the charges here alledged, as the authorities for his execution, might admit of much modification and more favourable interpretation.

Neither is the universal astonishment diminished by the consideration that this event seems to be the effect rather of some hasty movement of momentary anger, than the result of a conviction that the demerits and crimes of the victim could be expiated by no milder treatment.

However, there are persons qualified to judge of such matters, who are of [the] opinion that the alienation of the sultan's mind from his favourite has been the work of time, and that the insidious importunities of his personal enemies have gradually produced a crisis, when any open attempt to undermine his sway would have failed.

It is well known that for some months past, Halet Efendi had been under the necessity of having recourse to less honourable means in order to sustain his power – and being probably aware that the sultan was wavering whether to support him against the clamorous and almost seditious demands of the people, or yield to the more effectual suggestions of his official advisers, it must have occurred to him that the unbounded confidence he had hitherto enjoyed might have its term – and that the perseverance of his foes might at length overcome that ascendancy which he had usurped, and had hoped to maintain beyond the reach of envy or caprice.

His power once shaken, his destruction was inevitable. But to anticipate this blow and to confirm his influence over the sultan, he had lately endeavoured to soothe his irritability and to fascinate his understanding by inducing him to comply with customs repugnant to his nature as a Musulman and inconsistent with his dignity as a sovereign. Halet himself had long been addicted to drinking – and it is said that his example had seduced the sterner habits of Mahmud [II] – then that he had expatiated on the advantages and luxuries of modern refinements in the preparation of repasts and the service of the table; the sultan allowed himself in this instance also to be drawn away from the usages of his countrymen – and moreover, Halet recently persuaded him to adopt the use of carriages in his excursions in the vicinity of Constantinople. All these innovations appear to have had their temporary effect, and to have lulled the suspicions of the sultan – but to retain a control over the affections of an indulgent but captious master only by administering to his amusements, is at best a hazardous enterprise, and can only succeed during the novelty of the gratification that produces a pleasurable but no durable excitement. Such seems to have been the course of Halet's attempts to secure himself against the reverses of fortune. But the sultan wearied by incessant and artful insinuations, and his judgment at last becoming less blinded by habitual, but now declining confidence – aware also of the turbulent dispositions of his subjects – willing perhaps to attribute the troubles of the country to the pernicious counsels of one whom he no longer considered as infallible – thinking moreover, that by this sacrifice he could calm his own apprehensions, and appease the refractory temper of the people – conscious too that it was no longer a struggle with his own private feelings thus to surrender an object of execration to the cabals of the Seraglio and the vengeance of an enraged populace – yielding to such a combination of

circumstances, the sultan, it may be presumed, has considered himself as only consulting the prosperity and welfare of the Empire in thus deviating from the usual practice of exiling political offenders – and whatever remains of regard he might still have cherished towards this exalted individual, he may have received a due compensation in the persuasion that by this single sacrifice he has secured the future obedience of his subjects – and if, as it is supposed, Halet has been the sole director of the Empire and of its resources, and the chief regulator of its foreign and domestic administration, the sultan may also feel consoled in the prospect of witnessing, under other guidance, the re-establishment of tranquillity and the return to such measures as may eventually add to the internal security of the country in the consolidation of its essential interests, and by the adoption of a more conciliatory system in the conduct of its external relations.

Under these impressions, it may in fine be assumed that by this decisive and resolute exercise of his authority, the sultan wishes it to be understood that whilst he has thus consented to condemn his favourite to an ignominious death, and conceded to the solicitations of his advisers what he had refused to the threats of the janissaries, he has, at the same time destroyed the real origin of those disastrous measures that have introduced a revolutionary spirit amongst his Greek subjects, and disunion and discord amongst the Musulmans – and has also made an ample atonement for the wrongs which have so inopportunately excited the resentment of his too susceptible neighbours.

Whatever may be the sultan's views, or the system he intends in future to pursue, no alteration has as yet taken place. The same delays and difficulties exist in all the details of the different departments; the same haughty demeanour, the same positive disinclination to oblige still prevail, and to judge at once from passing events, there is enough to justify the notion entertained by many, that the destruction of Halet Efendi was merely a measure of finance affording a pretext for extorting money from the numerous friends and adherents attached to his person and fortunes...

IV. TNA, FO 78/119, ff. 1–9, 10 January 1823 (No. 1)

[Hamilton to Canning re: the commercial transactions of British merchants, the state of the Greek uprising, and the Porte's perceptions and observations of the recently concluded Congress of Verona.]

...It gives me much satisfaction to be able to inform you that this government has at length been induced to pay some attention to the repeated appeals that have been made to it in behalf of the British merchants, claimants for the bonus promised to them in the year 1821 on the sale of certain cargoes of grain imported into Constantinople.

Ali Bey, the head of the grain department, has been directed by the Porte to enquire into the nature of these demands, and to make an official report to the *reis efendi* [Ottoman foreign minister, Mehmed Sadik Efendi]. The merchants have been invited to attend at his house in Constantinople and to state their claims. The first meeting took place the day before yesterday – and though some time must elapse

before any termination can be expected, there is reason to believe that the government will be inclined to adopt some plan in order to remunerate the persons who have been so long and so improperly deprived of what is due to them.

It has lately become very apparent that the government wishes it to be publicly understood that every lenient and conciliatory measure prudence can justify, will be strictly followed with a view to ensure the confidence of its rebel subjects in the frequent orders that have been issued to receive with kindness all those who submit, and to tranquillize the fears of those who deluded by false hopes and misled by bad example, still continue in arms against the sultan.

All the agents of the different pashas have been summoned to the Porte and directed to announce to their employers that it is the absolute command of His Highness that all *reaya* [Christian subjects] who live under their respective governments should be well treated, and that no one be allowed to commit any act of injustice either on their persons or their property; and it is also affirmed that written injunctions to this effect have been forwarded to the pashas, particularly to those in Europe. Moreover, last Sunday a letter from the Greek [ecumenical] patriarch [Anthimos III] was read in the Greek churches of Pera, stating, that whereas the Grand Seignior [the sultan] had great reason to approve of the conduct of his Greek subjects in Constantinople, the strictest orders had been proclaimed that they should be protected and be permitted to exercise their different trades without hindrance or molestation.¹⁹

These circumstances and others of a similar description are strongly indicative of a change of disposition in the character of the government, and though the turbulent temper of some of the janissaries, for whose removal the sultan and his ministers are supposed to be devising some vigorous measures, still harasses its plans and impedes the course it would willingly pursue for the immediate improvement of the country and the speedier termination of the existing disorders – yet it is evident that

¹⁹ Pera (Beyoğlu), the district on the European side of Constantinople, north of the Golden Horn, housed European embassies and merchant warehouses. On the selection and installment ceremony of Anthimos III as ecumenical patriarch: Prousis, *Lord Strangford at the Sublime Porte (1822)*, 210–211, 219–220. He succeeded the deceased Eugenius II (1821–22), who had replaced the executed Grigorios V, publicly hanged on Easter Sunday in 1821 for alleged treason, namely, his failure as head of the Greek Christian community to prevent the Greek uprising. The fate of Grigorios, one of the many excesses committed by Turks and Greeks in the opening months of the revolt, transformed the Greek struggle for liberty into a war of religion, an escalating cycle of violence and reprisal, not just in Constantinople but also in Smyrna, the Peloponnese, Chios, and other areas. Strangford's published letters cited many examples of these mutual atrocities, including the Chios massacre of 1822. Also see Charles Frazee, *The Orthodox Church and Independent Greece, 1821–1852*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969, 22–53 *passim*, on the precarious status of the ecumenical patriarchs during the early phase of the Greek rebellion.

within this last fortnight, a considerable alteration has taken place both in the tone of the ministers and the manner in which the current business is conducted.

Jellal Pasha [also cited in sources as Djelaleddin Bey] is already arrived at Larissa [a town and military post in Thessaly], where he is to take the command of the Ottoman troops against the Greeks in the Morea. It is confidently stated that he is furnished with the most precise orders to enforce the severest discipline amongst his troops and to prohibit every sort of excess – to give every encouragement to all those who recognize the authority of the sultan, and to offer pardon and forgiveness to those who may repent of having taken part in the insurrection.

There is also a report, though I know not upon what it is founded, that the inhabitants of the Morea have already expressed a wish to negotiate, and to offer their submission to the acceptance of the pasha – humbly entreating permission for their deputies to proceed to headquarters.

Nearly two years have now elapsed since the Porte has been engaged in ineffectual efforts to subdue its *reaya* by force of arms; wearied by such struggles, and aware that its resources are greatly diminished; whilst the operations of its troops by land have been generally successful, it cannot but deplore the melancholy inefficiency of all its attempts by sea. In such a period of uncertainty, the sultan must be desirous to meet the wishes of all classes of his subjects – and to put an end to a state of things that can only tend to foment future disturbances and to exhaust the energies and the means of the Empire, by devastating his own country and destroying his own people – and it may also be added that the general pacification of Europe now confirmed by the reported termination of the congress at Verona has had its weight in influencing the resolves of the sultan, who in viewing the continued alliance of the powers of Christendom, must feel, according to Turkish policy, the increased necessity of preserving tranquillity in his own dominions.

It cannot be supposed that the Porte has viewed with indifference the late congress at Verona, or that it has been for a moment forgetful of its object or regardless of its proceedings.

From this assemblage of so many crowned heads and of so many plenipotentiaries, the Porte without doubt contemplated, with no small complacency, the probability that whilst so many contending interests were the subjects of discussion, there could not exist that concurrence of opinion on such a diversity of points, or that degree of union in the counsels of so many preponderating powers, which alone could render its dissolution as amicable as its commencement.

This government has only learned by past experience that its security has been founded on the dissensions that have prevailed amongst the Christian courts of Europe – and that when attacked by one formidable enemy, the jealousy of another potent neighbour or ally has always operated in its favour.

The meeting therefore of the congress may not have excited so much alarm of impending danger, as a hope that the result would be productive of all those advantages which the Porte has been accustomed to derive from the distracted counsels of other nations.

Under the fallacious impression that no circumstances could possibly work a total change in the ordinary course of events, and fully confirmed in the idea that the Congress of Verona would only tend to disunite those powers whom temporary motives of policy had conciliated, the Porte has persisted in the same haughty maintenance of ridiculous pretensions, and in the same unbecoming arrogance and obstinacy, which have in former times involved the Empire in difficulties and distress, but which the sequel has not always proved to be impolitic or unattended with compensation.

But now that it has ascertained that the most perfect unanimity has prevailed throughout the late discussions, and that the congress is about to separate, and the sovereigns and their ministers about to return to their respective countries animated by the same spirit of cordiality that engaged the universal consent to the formation of this august assembly, it may be presumed that this government cannot anticipate with the same calmness a succession of similar results. If discord in the European courts has hitherto been the prop of Turkey, union may be the signal of its downfall. Such indeed may be the unenlightened views of the Divan.

Uninformed as to the real change of politics that the late convulsions of Europe have produced in the allied cabinets, and presuming, on its own narrow judgment, that no power can be sufficiently magnanimous as to forego its interests or its policy for the general benefit of mankind, this government can only view in this new system, in this union instead of discord, the establishment of an order of things which must prove in the end inimical to its affairs, and most prejudicial to its security.

Two consequences the Porte may imagine will naturally arise from the harmony and sincere good will which have marked the progress and terminated the deliberations of these meetings – 1. That they will be occasionally repeated – and that when the politics of Europe are the subject of debate, the situation and conduct of this country must also form a prominent topic – and it can hardly be assumed that the Porte will repose implicit confidence in assemblies, where the affairs of Turkey, not represented – not supported by its own agents – must be treated by foreigners, and consequently be left to the discretion of those ministers who, to maintain the dignity and interests of even a friendly power – who to think justly and to act impartially – must in such a predicament, be guided by a singleness of feeling and a disinterestedness of views, of which the political history of nations rarely offers an example – 2. This government, however convinced that its important concerns have hitherto been upheld by the united counsels and the protectorship of the Christian powers, and however willing to persuade itself that they will never be absolutely abandoned, must also be under some apprehension that those particular nations, who for the present have sacrificed their resentment for the promotion of the general happiness of Europe, and have also consented to suppress under peculiar circumstances any projects of aggrandizement, will consider themselves entitled not only to the forbearance, but even to the assistance of their allies, should future

events sanction a different system, and give a favourable construction to any act of hostility against Turkey.

Time and the judicious application of salutary counsels may effect much towards effacing such impressions and removing such apprehensions – and not till it is proved beyond a doubt that the powers of Europe have no other intention but to cooperate for the preservation of a general pacific system, making at all times the integrity of this Empire the basis of such system, can it be expected that this government will surrender its deeply rooted prejudices or consent to anticipate its future welfare in the confirmation of what it has ever been taught to dread as a calamity.

It is not easy to learn with any certainty what has been the effect produced on the minds of the sultan and his ministers by the refusal of the congress to admit the representations of the Greek deputies sent by the then existing government of Argos to Verona²⁰ – but there can be no difficulty in being persuaded that this rejection has been considered as a most irrefragable proof of the amicable intentions of the allied courts towards this country, and of their determination not to interfere in the internal affairs of Turkey in any manner that can possibly injure the dignity of the sovereign, or weaken the stability of the government...

V. TNA, FO 78/119, ff. 11–13, 10 January 1823 (No. 2)

[Hamilton to Canning re: the Ottoman navy; the influential political role of top Ottoman officials such as the grand vizier and the *reis efendi*; and the latest information from Psara and Nauplion.²¹]

...The *tersana emini* [chief official or minister in the charge of the Ottoman navy] arrived here from the Dardanelles some days ago, and according to his report, the large ships are in so bad a state that it will be absolutely necessary to have them repaired in the dockyard of Constantinople – and they may be expected with the first southerly wind.

Ghalib Pasha, the declared opponent of Halet Efendi, has been recalled from exile and restored to all his honours – he is appointed to the joint governments of

20 The Greek revolutionary government, based in Argos (a town in the northeastern part of the Peloponnese), sent a delegation led by Count Andrea Metaxa to represent the cause of Greek independence at the Congress of Verona. The European powers, however, did not recognize the insurgent government and thus refused to accept the Greek delegates. See Nichols, *The European Pentarchy*, 253–255; Prousis, *Lord Strangford at the Sublime Porte (1822)*, 278–279, 375–376.

21 The Aegean island of Psara, a key center for the Greek insurgent fleet, played a major role in the Ottoman–Greek clash. The fortress town of Nauplion, on the northeastern coast of the Peloponnese, fell to Greek rebel forces in late 1822 after a lengthy siege. See the many references to Psara and Nauplion in Brewer and in the first two volumes of Strangford's correspondence.

Caesarea and Bozoah [Bozdağ?].²² It is also understood that he has been invited to pass through the capital, that the ministers of the Porte may have an opportunity of benefiting by his advice and experience.

It is a remarkable circumstance that there has been no council held for these last three weeks.

The affairs of the Empire appear to be entrusted to the control of the grand vizier [Deli Abdullah Pasha], the *reis efendi*, the *kiahya bey*, and Gianib Efendi; the two last mentioned individuals are supposed to exercise the greatest influence. Gianib Efendi has long been in indifferent health; he has frequently expressed a wish to retire from public business, but in the present state of things his absence would be a great misfortune, and he may be esteemed the most efficient member of the whole administration.²³

The Porte has received no intelligence from the Morea for some time past. The inclemency of the weather has prevented the arrival of Tartars – and for eight days not a single messenger from any part of the Turkish dominions has reached the capital, owing to the dreadful tempest of wind and snow that with little intermission has prevailed throughout this country for nearly a month, so that the usual communications with the provinces have been entirely stopped.

The Vienna post that has been due several days is still delayed on the road. The courier from Smyrna only arrived this morning, and has brought no news of importance.

It appears that the Psariotes, inflated by their late successes, have ventured to detain some vessels under French colours. The French commandant was about to repair to Psara in order to demand satisfaction for this insult.

The pirates of Kasos, it is reported, have taken a Russian vessel and massacred all the crew – and there still continued a rumour of the surrender of Nauplion to the Greeks...²⁴

22 Caesarea (modern-day Kayseri), a town located in Cappadocia, in central Anatolia. Bozoah probably refers to Bozdağ, a small town to the east of Smyrna (Izmir today).

23 In negotiations at the Porte, Strangford had numerous exchanges with the *reis efendi* and other high-ranking Ottoman officials, including the *kiahya bey* or minister of the interior. In his letters of 1821–22, the ambassador often commented on the political views and influence of Gianib Efendi, the *chiaux bashi* or head of the sultan's palace police. Prousis, *Lord Strangford at the Sublime Porte (1822)*, 35–135 *passim*, 172, 186, 207, 229–258 *passim*.

24 Kasos, an island in the Dodecanese, became a base for pirate attacks against Ottoman and European shipping during the Ottoman–Greek conflict. *Idem*, *Lord Strangford at the Sublime Porte (1821)*, 190, 263. British consular records from Smyrna and other ports reported cases of piracy and plunder in the Aegean Archipelago during the Greek upheaval: TNA, FO 78/138, ff. 52–59; 78/142, ff. 20–26, 37–40, 60–72; 78/143, ff. 139–44, 197–213; 78/145, ff. 301–05; 78/153, ff. 244–45; 78/172, ff. 207–10; 78/173, ff. 15–20, 33–38; 78/175, ff. 30–37.