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## “Russian Skill and Turkish Imbecility”: The Treaty of Kuchuk Kainardji Reconsidered

Just over two centuries ago, on July 21, 1774, at the village of Kuchuk Kainardji,<sup>1</sup> Russia and Turkey signed a peace treaty which not only marked one of history's great shifts in power relationships, but also became a continuing source of controversy among statesmen and scholars. Most of the terms of the treaty, which ended a six-year war, are clear, easy to summarize, and obvious in their impact.<sup>2</sup> But articles 7 and 14, which dealt with the protection of Christianity in the Ottoman Empire and with an Orthodox church that Russia could build in Istanbul, have been subject to widely varying interpretations. The central question is whether Russia received, under these articles, a right to act as protector of Ottoman Christians. Many historians have contended that the treaty of Kuchuk Kainardji did confer such a guardian role on Russia, and some have adopted the opinion that the treaty, especially in this regard, was an example of “Russian skill and Turkish imbecility.” Other historians have maintained that any such right, under the treaty, was vague. Still others have said it was nonexistent. A reexamination of the historical evidence is long overdue.

The obvious first task is to go back to the text of the treaty of Kuchuk Kainardji to see what articles 7 and 14 specify about protection of Christians. In this connection, determination of the exact nature of the church that Russia could build in Istanbul—whether it was to be an ordinary Greek Orthodox church or a Russian Orthodox church—seems to be important. Then, other provisions of the treaty or circumstances of that immediate era which may have furnished a basis for a Russian claim to be protector of Ottoman Chris-

1. A village south of Silistria, on the right bank of the Danube, in present-day Bulgaria. The name in Turkish means “little hot spring” and is spelled “Küçük Kaynarca” in the modern Turkish alphabet.

2. Russo-Turkish disagreement over the meaning of some clauses, especially concerning the Crimean Tatars, was settled by a “Convention explicative” of Aynali Kavak, March 10, 1779; text in Gabriel Noradounghian, *Recueil d'actes internationaux de l'Empire ottoman*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1897–1903), 1:338–44. On these and other problems concerning the Crimea between 1774 and 1779 see Alan W. Fisher, *The Russian Annexation of the Crimea, 1772–1783* (Cambridge, 1970), pp. 55–111.

tians must be considered. Finally, an attempt will be made to show how the judgment about Russian skill and Turkish imbecility originated and how it came to affect historical writing.

The treaty of Kuchuk Kainardji as a whole is not in question here, but a brief summary is useful. The treaty marked a turning point as momentous for the Near East, as the American Declaration of Independence was for the Atlantic world two years later. By its provisions Russia gained a strategic foothold on the north shore of the Black Sea. She also gained acknowledgment of the independence of the Tatars, a move preliminary to her own absorption of the Crimea. She achieved a special position in Moldavia and Wallachia, even while these principalities remained under Ottoman suzerainty. She gained privileges for an expanded commerce that could now move freely on the Black Sea and through the Straits into the Mediterranean, as well as by land in Ottoman domains. She reaffirmed her right to permanent and prominent diplomatic representation in the Ottoman capital of Istanbul, and gained the further right to plant Russian consulates wherever she wished in the Ottoman Empire. All of this meant not only a quantum leap forward in Russia's international position but also a proportional weakening of the once formidable Turkish power. The extent of gains secured to Russia by the treaty was immensely pleasing to Catherine II, who, even after the military victory, had not dared to hope for quite that much. She exuded joyful satisfaction to her correspondents and her guests. To Count Peter Aleksandrovich Rumiantsov, her field marshal and negotiator, she dispatched a present of thirty pineapples newly ripened in her garden in gratitude for a treaty "the likes of which," she wrote to him, "Russia has never had before."<sup>3</sup> Russia's gains and Turkey's losses were so evident in 1774 and in the course of the subsequent relations of the two empires, that there is no divergence of views among historians as to the significance of the event. The treaty as a whole requires no bicentennial reevaluation. It need simply be noted as a major step, possibly the greatest single step prior to 1955, by Russia into the Near East.

The one controversial matter that has persisted concerns Russia's relationship, under the treaty of Kuchuk Kainardji, to the Greek Orthodox peoples of the Ottoman Empire. Sometimes this controversy has taken the form of an argument between governments, particularly in 1853, when the Crimean War resulted from the Russian assertion of a right to protect their Orthodox brethren in Turkey and the Turkish denial that there was any such right.<sup>4</sup>

3. Draft of a letter to Rumiantsov, undated (ca. July 29 to August 3, 1774, O.S.) in *Sbornik imperatorskago russkago istoricheskago obshchestva* (hereafter cited as *SIRIO*), 13 (1874): 429.

4. See the Ottoman government's manifesto on its declaration of war against Russia, October 4, 1853, referring to Russia's unacceptable demand which she sought to ground on a provision of the treaty of Kuchuk Kainardji, in G. F. de Martens, ed., *Nouveau recueil général des traités . . .*, 20 vols. in 22 (Göttingen, 1843-75), 15:548.

But among historians, divergent views about a Russian protectorate have existed independent of the question of the Crimean War's origins. A recapitulation of these conflicting views will serve to show why the treaty text needs to be considered again.

At one end of the spectrum are historians who flatly assert that Kuchuk Kainardji did accord Russia a right to protect the Greek religion and the Greek Orthodox churches throughout the Ottoman Empire. This position is most forthrightly stated in Paul Miliukov's history, recently published in English translation from the French original: "Finally—and this was a clause gravid with major consequences, which granted her [Russia] the right of intervention in Turkey's domestic affairs—she won acknowledgment of her duty to defend the religious freedom of the sultan's Christian subjects and to protect them against the exactions of the tax collector."<sup>5</sup> Although stated in extreme terms—no other historian says that Turkey acknowledged Russia's "duty" to protect Christians—Miliukov's viewpoint has a long and respectable ancestry. Edouard Driault says something similar: the treaty of Kuchuk Kainardji had "formulas in which the Sublime Porte had 'permitted' Russia 'constantly to protect the Christian religion' (art. VII). . . ."<sup>6</sup> This view parallels that of Sergei Zhigarev, who says that the Porte gave Russia "the right to protect the Orthodox church on all the territory of the Turkish Empire," and who cites with approval the opinions of Vladimir Ulianitskii to support the contention that Russia obtained by the treaty "a unilateral right of interfering in the internal affairs of the Turkish Empire with the objective of defending the Christian populations of the East."<sup>7</sup> Albert Sorel accepts the arguments of Russian diplomats and publicists, concluding in his classic work on the Eastern Question that "this treaty . . . made of Russia the protectress . . . of the religious independence of the Christians of Turkey."<sup>8</sup> Two of the major European historians of the Ottoman Empire espouse the same view: Nicholas Jorga says that "Russia provided for herself the right of protection over all coreligionists," while Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall as early as 1832 averred that Kuchuk Kainardji "recognized the Christian power most hostile to the Porte as . . . protector of the Christian religion and churches."<sup>9</sup>

5. Paul Miliukov, Charles Seignobos, and L. Eisenmann, *History of Russia*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann, 3 vols. (New York, 1968–69), 2:111. The same statement in French in the original, *Histoire de Russie*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1932–33), 2:580.

6. Edouard Driault and Michel Lhéritier, *Histoire diplomatique de la Grèce*, 5 vols. (Paris, 1925–26), 1:143.

7. Sergei Zhigarev, *Russkaia politika v vostochnom voprose* (Moscow, 1896), pp. 199–200.

8. Albert Sorel, *La Question d'Orient au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 4th ed. (Paris, 1902 [1st ed. 1878]), p. 262.

9. Nicholas Jorga, *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches*, 5 vols. (Gotha, 1908–13),

Other historians, though they may not think that Russia was entitled to an explicit right of protection, believe that the treaty gave her a right to make representations to the Ottoman government in behalf of its Christian subjects. A typical statement, in a respected textbook, this one by Sidney Harcave, asserts that under the treaty terms the Ottoman Empire "agreed that Russia might appeal to the Sultan at any time on behalf of the Turkish Christians."<sup>10</sup> George Vernadsky puts it only slightly differently: "Russian envoys were given power to confer with the Sultan upon affairs concerning the Orthodox church."<sup>11</sup> Textbooks tend to reflect the generally received opinion, and on this point there is a reasonably broad consensus.<sup>12</sup>

A related but less dogmatic view is taken by historians who find that Kuchuk Kainardji allowed the tsars to claim a right to protect, or to make representations about, Ottoman Christians because it contained vague or loosely worded clauses. Michael Florinsky and Hugh Seton-Watson refer to Russia's "ill-defined" right to protect Ottoman Christians under the treaty.<sup>13</sup> Charles and Barbara Jelavich see "ambiguous wording" in the treaty, Akdes Nimet Kurat sees "obscure or confused expression," in article 7 of the treaty, while M. S. Anderson points to "a vague and potentially dangerous phrase" in that same article, which allowed Russia to make representations "in behalf of a church in Constantinople 'and those who serve it.'" One could give multiple examples illustrating this charge of vagueness, which also commands

4:511–12; Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall, *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches*, 10 vols. (Pest, 1827–35), 8:447. Among other historians who have expressed similar opinions with various degrees of shading are Emile Bourgeois, Sergei Goriainov, Bernard Lewis, Alfred Rambaud, L. S. Stavrianos, and Nicholas Zernov.

10. Sidney Harcave, *Russia: A History*, 6th ed. (Philadelphia, 1968 [1st ed. 1952]), p. 157.

11. George Vernadsky, *A History of Russia*, 6th ed. (New Haven, 1969 [3rd printing 1971]), p. 167. The first edition was 1929.

12. L. S. Stavrianos, *The Balkans Since 1453* (New York, 1958), p. 192, and Barbara Jelavich, *A Century of Russian Foreign Policy, 1814–1914* (Philadelphia, 1964), pp. 20–21, make almost identical assertions about Russia's right of representation, quoting a portion of article 7. Jelavich's statement in her expanded version, *St. Petersburg and Moscow: Tsarist and Soviet Foreign Policy, 1814–1974* (Bloomington, Ind., 1974), pp. 20–21, quotes a few more words of article 7 and so narrows the claim. Sidney N. Fisher takes a broad view in *The Middle East: A History*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1968 [1st ed. 1959]), p. 251, citing articles 12 and 14 but obviously meaning 7 and 14. Among others advancing a similar opinion on Russia's right of representation are Cemal Tükin, "Küçük Kaynarca," *İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul, 1940– ), vol. 6, p. 1069; Enver Ziya Karal, *Nizam-ı cedid ve Tanzimat devirleri* (Ankara, 1970 [3rd printing]; first published 1947), p. 109; Norman E. Saul, *Russia and the Mediterranean, 1797–1807* (Chicago, 1970), pp. 8–9.

13. Michael T. Florinsky, *Russia: A History and an Interpretation*, 2 vols. (New York, 1953; reprinted 1960), 1:526; Hugh Seton-Watson, *The Russian Empire, 1801–1917* (Oxford, 1967), p. 46.

fairly wide support among historians.<sup>14</sup>

Some of the historians who see Russian acquisition of a right of interference in behalf of Ottoman Christians in the treaty—whether through precise stipulation or because of vagueness—repeat a colorful characterization of the treaty as a product of Russian “skill” and of Turkish “imbecility.” This judgment, however, did not originate with a historian but with a contemporary observer, the Austrian diplomat, Franz Thugut, who in 1774 was the inter-nuncio representing the Habsburg sovereign in Istanbul. Thugut’s judgment is most recently cited by Akdes Nimet Kurat in his monumental work on Russo-Turkish relations, and by L. S. Stavrianos in his Balkan history.<sup>15</sup> The same judgment is also quoted by Reşat Ekrem Koçu (1934), by Edouard Driault and Michel Lhéritier (1925), by J. A. R. Marriott (1917), by Driault much earlier (1898) and by Zhigarev (1896).<sup>16</sup> Most of these historians link Thugut’s judgment to the articles of the treaty that touch on Russian relations with the Greek Orthodox church of the Ottoman Empire. Since almost all of them cite Albert Sorel as their source for the quotation, and none cite any other, it is well to see exactly what Sorel, in his influential work on the Eastern Question, relays from Thugut:

The whole accumulation [*échafaudage*] of the stipulations of the treaty of Kainardji is a model of skill on the part of the Russian diplomats and a rare example of imbecility on the part of the Turkish negotiators,” wrote Thugut. “By the dexterous combination of the articles of this treaty, the Ottoman Empire becomes from today onward a sort of Russian province. Since for the future Russia is in a position to dictate laws to it, she will perhaps content herself, for some years more, with reigning in the name of the Grand Seigneur [that is, the Sultan], until she judges the moment favorable to take possession of it definitely . . . .”<sup>17</sup>

14. Charles and Barbara Jelavich, *The Balkans* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1970), p. 35; Akdes Nimet Kurat, *Türkiye ve Rusya, XVIII. yüzyıl sonundan Kurtuluş Savaşına kadar Türk-Rus ilişkileri (1798–1919)* (Ankara, 1970), pp. 28–30; M. S. Anderson, *The Eastern Question, 1774–1923* (London, 1966), p. xi. See also Yahya Armajani, *The Middle East, Past and Present* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1970), p. 196.

15. Kurat, *Türkiye ve Rusya*, p. 31; Stavrianos, *The Balkans Since 1453*, p. 192.

16. Reşat Ekrem Koçu, *Osmanlı muahedeler ve kapitülasyonlar, 1300–1920* (Istanbul, 1934), p. 102; J. A. R. Marriott, *The Eastern Question*, 4th ed. (Oxford, 1940 [1st ed. 1917]), p. 153; Driault and Lhéritier, *Histoire diplomatique*, 1:24; Edouard Driault, *La Question d’Orient*, 8th ed. (Paris, 1921 [1st ed. 1898]), p. 55; Zhigarev, *Russkaia politika*, p. 198. Marriott on p. 152 cites articles 12 and 14 but obviously means 7 and 14. Zhigarev and Driault and Lhéritier say Thugut’s view may be slightly exaggerated, but concur in his general appraisal of Kuchuk Kainardji as reflecting Russian skill and Turkish imbecility.

17. Sorel, *Question d’Orient*, pp. 263–64. Sorel gives one additional sentence from Thugut, not essential here. The above translation is a little closer to Sorel’s French than that by F. C. Bramwell in Albert Sorel, *The Eastern Question in the Eighteenth Century* (New York, 1969 [1st ed. London, 1898]), p. 250. A Turkish translation by Yusuf Ziya

Sorel cites Thugut's reports of August 17 and September 3, 1774, as the source, without giving any indication of where he got Thugut's reports. To this point we shall return shortly.

At the far end of the spectrum are historians who find in the treaty only very limited rights for Russia—rights on which she later tried to build vastly expanded claims. Nicholas Riasanovsky, in a recent Russian history, best represents this view: "Russia acquired a right to build an Orthodox church in Constantinople, while the Turks promised to protect Christian churches and to accept Russian representations in behalf of the new church to be built in the capital. The provisions of the treaty relating to Christians and to Christian worship became the basis of many subsequent Russian claims in regard to Turkey."<sup>18</sup> This view is also the one espoused generally by Theodor Schiemann, Bernard Pares, and B. H. Sumner—that the treaty simply provided Russia limited rights that could be a "pretext" (Schiemann) or a "basis for claims" (Sumner) or that could later be "interpreted by some to imply a Russian protectorate" (Pares).<sup>19</sup> A number of historians of diplomacy and of the Near East have taken a similarly cautious view.<sup>20</sup>

All these views cannot be correct. Obviously the text of the treaty is the place to start a reexamination. What does it say?

Most historians, particularly those writing in the West, have relied on a translated version of the treaty of Kuchuk Kainardji, either in French or in

[Özer] also appeared: *On sekizinci asirda Mesele-i Şarkîye ve Kaynarca muahedesi* (Istanbul, 1911), as well as a Polish translation by Marya Gomolinska, *Kwestyja Wschodnia w w. XVIII* (Warsaw, 1905).

18. Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1969 [1st ed. 1963]), p. 294.

19. Theodor Schiemann, *Geschichte Russlands unter Kaiser Nikolaus I*, 4 vols. (Berlin, 1904–19), 1:257–58; Bernard Pares, *A History of Russia*, 4th ed. (New York, 1946 [1st ed. 1926]), p. 266; B. H. Sumner, *Survey of Russian History* (London, 1944), p. 238. Hans Uebersberger, *Russlands Orientpolitik in den letzten zwei Jahrhunderten*, 2 vols. (Stuttgart, 1913), 1:335–37, takes a similar view, as does Sergei Pushkarev, *The Emergence of Modern Russia, 1801–1917* (New York, 1963 [1st ed. in Russian, New York, 1956]), p. 344; see also Charles and Barbara Jelavich, *The Balkans*, p. 35.

20. A. J. P. Taylor, for instance, following Harold Temperley, says "there was clearly no general right of protection by Russia," in his *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848–1918* (Oxford, 1954 [New York, 1971]), p. 52, n. 1. Temperley's judgment is in *England and the Near East: The Crimea* (London, 1936), pp. 467–69. J. C. Hurewitz speaks of Russia's "claim" to a right of protection as "based upon a liberal (and questionable) interpretation of articles 7 and 14" in *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East*, 2 vols. (Princeton, 1956), 1:54. For similar views, see also Alfred S. Stern, *Geschichte Europas . . . 1815 . . . 1871*, 10 vols. (Stuttgart, 1894–1924), 8:35; A. Debisdour, *Histoire diplomatique de l'Europe . . . (1814–1878)*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1931 [1st ed. 1891]), 1:101 and 2:86; Stanford J. Shaw, *Between Old and New: The Ottoman Empire Under Sultan Selim III, 1789–1807* (Cambridge, Mass., 1971), p. 10; Armajani, *The Middle East*, p. 196.



English. But neither French nor English was an original or official language of the treaty. Three official languages were used in 1774—Russian, Turkish, and Italian. Field Marshal Rumiantsov signed in Russian and Italian, while the Ottoman grand vezir Muhsinzade Mehmed Pasha signed in Turkish and Italian, as article 28 of the treaty itself stipulates. No scholar appears to have tried to compare the three versions.<sup>21</sup> In this three-language situation, should the Turkish and Russian texts disagree on any point, the Italian text would control.<sup>22</sup> Articles 7 and 14 in particular, since they have been the basis for the judgments cited above, need scrutiny in the original languages.

Article 7, fortunately, exhibits only minor differences between the Turkish and Russian texts. The most significant difference is that in the Russian text the Sublime Porte promises “defense” or “protection” (*zashchita*) of the Christian religion, whereas in the Turkish text the word used (*siyanet*) can mean simply “preservation” as well as “protection,” and is not the usual word with the stronger connotation of “defense” (*himaye*). So it is best to go to the controlling Italian text of article 7, and to put it into the clearest possible English. Article 7 says:

The Sublime Porte promises a firm protection to the Christian Religion and to its Churches; it further permits the Ministers of the Imperial Court of Russia to make in every circumstance various representations to the Porte in favor of the below-mentioned Church erected at Constantinople, cited in Art. xiv, no less than of those who serve it, and promises to receive those remonstrances with attention, as made by a respected person of a neighboring and sincerely friendly power.

21. Kurat, *Türkiye ve Rusya*, p. 29, compares the Russian and Turkish texts of article 7; his transcription of the Turkish text has inconsequential errors. Alan W. Fisher, *The Russian Annexation*, p. 55, n. 2, says his comparison of Russian and Turkish texts of articles concerning the Crimea showed no discrepancies. Joseph L. Wieczynski, “The Myth of Kuchuk Kainardji in American Histories of Russia,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, 4, no. 4 (July 1968): 276–79, uses only a text in English as basis for evaluating historians’ statements.

22. Russian text is in *Polnoe sobranie zakonov rossijskoi imperii* (hereafter cited as *PSZ*), 134 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1830–1916), Series 1, vol. 19, no. 14164, pp. 957–67; in *Dogovory Rossii s Vostokom*, ed. T. Iuzefovich (St. Petersburg, 1869), pp. 24–41; and in *Sbornik gramot i dogovorov o prisoedinenii tsarstv i oblastei k Gosudarstvu Rossijskomu v XVII–XIX vekakh* (Petersburg, 1922), pp. 383–406. All are the same except for minor spelling variations. The last cites a printed copy in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs archives under “Turkey, 1774.” E. I. Druzhinina, *Kiuchuk-Kainardzhiiskii mir 1774 goda (ego podgotovka i zakliuchenie)* (Moscow, 1955), prints the text as an appendix; on p. 349 she notes a few differences between the *PSZ* text and a “contemporary copy,” none of which affect the treaty’s wording or meaning. Even she, having used several archives, does not refer to the original manuscript copy in Russian that was signed at Kuchuk Kainardji. I do not know if this still exists. I have relied on the *PSZ* text.

In the Başbakanlık Arşivi in Istanbul I have not discovered the original either in Turkish or in Italian. But an early and presumably contemporary manuscript copy is

The Italian confirms the Russian—it is “protection” and not merely “preservation” that the Ottoman government promises. The Russian text further says that the Porte will “take into consideration” the Russian ministers’ representations; the Turkish text can be read to mean simply that the Porte will “receive” the representations. Again, the Italian text, reading “receive with attention,” confirms the Russian.

But when article 7 is considered as a whole in relation to the judgments earlier set forth, the position adopted by so many scholars must be seriously questioned. Article 7 does indeed recognize a protectorate over the Ottoman Christians, but it is the protectorate of the Ottoman government itself. The article is not vague on this point, it is specific. In fact the precision of this provision is emphasized by the juxtaposition of the broad power of protection specifically recognized as Turkey’s, and the narrow power accorded Russia. This power too is precisely expressed. The ministers representing Russia in Istanbul have the right to make representations in behalf of a single church building and of those who serve it. If “those who serve it” are simply clergymen and caretakers, as indicated by the Russian and Turkish treaty texts, the number of faithful about whom Russia can make representations is small.<sup>23</sup>

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there in a register, *Ecnebi Defterler* No. 83/1, pp. 139–49, and I have relied on this. This may be the source for the official printed text in *Muahedat mecmuasi*, 5 vols. (Istanbul, A.H. 1294–98 [A.D. 1877/8–1880/1]), 3:254–75; the two texts are almost identical. Ahmed Cevdet, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, tertib-i cedid, 12 vols. in 6 (Istanbul, A.H. 1301–9 [A.D. 1883/4–1891/2]), 1:285–95, also gives the text, with very slight variations from the two preceding ones. I have found no complete text in modern Turkish letters. Reşat Ekrem (Koçu), *Osmanlı muahedeleri*, pp. 102–4, is a brief summary only, with comment.

The Italian text is in G. F. de Martens, ed., *Recueil des principaux traités . . . de l'Europe*, 7 vols. (Göttingen, 1791–1801), 4:606–38, and again in Martens, ed., *Recueil*, 2nd ed., 8 vols. (Göttingen, 1817–35), 2:286–322, in each case taken from *Storia del Anno* for 1774. I have seen no other complete Italian text. Druzhinina, *Kiuchuk-Kainardzhiiskii mir*, pp. 274–75, prints a clear facsimile of the first and last pages only of the Italian manuscript original in the Arkhiv Vneshnei Politiki Rossii. There are some differences in spelling, in word forms, and occasionally even in wording between the Martens and facsimile Italian versions, although the meaning is not affected. It would be a great service if a facsimile of the complete Italian text, and also of the Russian original, if extant, were published in Moscow. Similarly, if a Turkish scholar can discover the original Italian and Turkish copies in Istanbul, their publication would be welcome.

Martens, *Recueil*, 1st ed., 1:507–22, gives a “private translation” of the treaty into French, probably from the Italian of *Storia del Anno*. Noradounghian, *Recueil*, 1:319–34, is a different translation into French, from either Italian or Turkish. George Vernadsky et al., *A Source Book for Russian History . . .*, 3 vols. (New Haven, 1972), 2:406–7, give an independent translation of extracts into English from *PSZ*. On other translations into French and English see notes 36 and 37 below.

23. The Russian term here tends to mean “employees,” the Turkish to mean “officials,” while the Italian seems slightly broader.



One might stretch the Italian phrase to include a whole congregation, perhaps several hundred communicants, though the phrase probably would not bear the weight of that construction. But to state that the article gives Russia a right of making representations in behalf of all Orthodox churches or of all Orthodox believers in the Ottoman Empire, or even in behalf of a large number of churches or of believers, is a flight of fancy. The provision about Russian representation is precise, its meaning clear; there is no vagueness leading to the potential danger of misinterpretation. To suggest that the Russian right of making representations encompasses the Porte's promise of protecting the Christian religion is patently misconstruing the document.

The Russian right of making representations to the Ottoman government concerned a church which was more specifically described in article 14. Again the Russian and Turkish texts of the article exhibit no differences in meaning, but, since the Turkish text is rather wordier than the Russian, here also the Italian is the best guide. It says:

The most high Court of Russia shall be able, on the example of the other Powers, aside from the Residence Church, to have one built in the section of Galata in the street called Bey-Uglu, which Church shall be public, called Russo-Greek, and which shall always be maintained under the protection of the Minister of that Empire, and shall be unharmed by any molestation and outrage.<sup>24</sup>

The church that the Russian minister could protect, and about which he could make representations, was, then, not to be an ordinary Greek Orthodox church, but a Russian church of the Greek rite.<sup>25</sup>

This may be considered a distinction without a difference. After all, the Russian and Greek churches are fundamentally one. They come from the same tradition. Both normally use the liturgy of St. John Chrysostom in their services. But the distinction does seem to be important in the Ottoman context. Instead of being under the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Istanbul, like the other Orthodox churches of Istanbul, the new church would be unique in being under Russian protection. It would use the Old Slavonic, which would be even more unfamiliar to the Greeks of Istanbul than to the Russians of Moscow.<sup>26</sup>

24. Galata was the part of Istanbul north of the Golden Horn in which most Europeans lived, as well as many native non-Muslims. European embassies were situated there in Beyoğlu, which is today usually the designation for a whole quarter rather than for its original and principal street. Pera, a Greek-derived name for Beyoğlu, was commonly used by Europeans.

25. The phrase "called Russo-Greek" is in the Italian "chiamata Russo-Greca." *Chiamata* does not mean simply "having the title of," but "having the essential character of," as is clear from its further use in article 11 of the treaty.

26. Isabel Florence Hapgood, *Service Book of the Holy Orthodox-Catholic Apostolic (Greco-Russian) Church, Compiled, Translated, and Arranged from the Old Church-*

The distinction between Russian and Greek churches, moreover, seems to be intentional if the wording of article 14 is a guide. A new church, "aside from the Residence Church," would likewise represent the national church, in this case the Russian church, of the envoy's country. Further, the new church was to be "on the example of the other Powers." The other powers were France and Austria (Catholic) and England and Prussia (Protestant). Although the Protestant powers did not have protected churches, France and Austria each acted as protector of a Roman Catholic church in Beyoğlu, apart from the embassy church. These churches were served by European religious orders, and the worshippers were principally foreign nationals.<sup>27</sup> Article 14 does not, to be sure, specify that the new Russian church would be principally for foreigners; this is an area of the treaty where a charge of "vagueness" might be made. However, in 1774, this may not have been vague at all. Though not conclusive, it is significant that a contemporary diplomat, long a resident of Istanbul and at home in both Turkish government and European diplomatic circles there, wrote that the treaty of Kuchuk Kainardji gave the Russian minister "the liberty to have built, in the quarter of Pera, a church for the use of his nationals."<sup>28</sup> These nationals were likely to be merchants and pilgrims, for the treaty of Kuchuk Kainardji provided broad freedoms for Russian merchants to trade by land and by sea in the Ottoman Empire, Istanbul being specifically mentioned as open to them (article 11). The treaty further granted Russians, both clergy and laymen, an uninhibited right of pilgrimage to Jerusalem and other centers (article 8). Today in Galata there still exist two or

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*Slavonic Service Books of the Russian Church, and Collated with the Service Books of the Greek Church* (Boston, 1906). See also John Glen King, *The Rites and Ceremonies of the Greek Church, in Russia* (London, 1772 [reprinted New York, 1970]), pp. vii, 5, 47, 133.

27. The considerable groups of native Catholics in the Ottoman Empire were mostly in Syria, Lebanon, Serbia, and Albania. In Istanbul the majority of Latin Catholics were probably foreign nationals. Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall, *Constantinopolis und der Bosphoros*, 2 vols. (Osnabrück, 1967 [original ed. 1822]), 2:126–27 mentions the protected Catholic churches in Beyoğlu; Robert Mantran, *Istanbul dans le second moitié du XVII siècle* (Paris, 1962), pp. 73, 561–62, has information on French-protected churches in an earlier period. There were very few Protestants in the Ottoman Empire; almost every one was a foreigner.

28. Ignatius Mouradgea d'Ohsson, *Tableau générale de l'Empire Othoman*, 2nd ed., 7 vols. in 8 (Paris, 1788–1824), 7:463–64. A chief dragoman and then chargé d'affaires for Sweden, d'Ohsson sometimes makes errors, and has made one earlier in this passage by describing treaty rights which Russia gained in the provinces of Moldavia and Wallachia as applying to the Ottoman Empire generally. But his statement on the church is simple and probably contains the understanding of 1774. As previously noted, Europeans usually said "Pera" for "Beyoğlu." J. W. Zinkeisen, *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches in Europa*, 7 vols. (Hamburg, 1840–63), 5:3, also says that the Greek church to be built in Galata was for Russian subjects.

three Russian churches which earlier had the function of serving large groups of pilgrims, and undoubtedly merchants as well.<sup>29</sup>

Two other pieces of evidence reinforce the conclusion that the new church was to be Russian rather than Greek. One is the nature of the original proposal for a church, made in the abortive peace negotiations at Bucharest in 1772–73 by the Russian negotiator A. M. Obreskov, who had earlier served as envoy in Istanbul. This proposal, with other documents on the negotiation, has been unearthed in the archives by a Russian scholar, E. I. Druzhinina. She shows that Obreskov, on his own initiative, proposed the building of a church in Istanbul because some of the local Greek Orthodox worshippers had been coming to the private Russian residence chapel for want of a church of their own nearby in Beyoğlu. A number of them petitioned him to use Russian influence to build a church under Russian protection, and Obreskov thought this a good move, as it would increase Russian influence among them. But the Greeks of Beyoğlu proposed that it be a church for Russian merchants, since without such a pretext the Ottoman government might not allow an official Russian-protected church. When Obreskov raised the point with the Turkish negotiators at Bucharest he actually represented it as a church for “clergymen confessing the Greco-Russian faith,” undoubtedly meaning pilgrims traveling to Jerusalem. The Turkish negotiators thereupon demurred, having no instructions on this new point, and Obreskov dropped the matter. But Obreskov’s draft of an article on such a church was resurrected when negotiations were later resumed at Kuchuk Kainardji and was incorporated word for word into the treaty as article 14.<sup>30</sup> What article 14 meant, then, to both the Russian and the Turkish negotiators of the treaty was the establishment of a Russian church for Russian clerics and, presumably, other pilgrims and merchants.

The second bit of evidence emerges from collation of the three treaty texts. Each text specifies in article 14 a “Russo-Greek” church in Beyoğlu.<sup>31</sup> Had the negotiators meant to indicate a Greek Orthodox church of the usual sort, they would have said so by calling it simply “Greek.” This is made clear by their use of the adjective “Greek” in article 16 to describe the Greek Orthodox religion of the Ottoman subjects. The Turkish term is the most revealing. It is “Rum.”<sup>32</sup> This was the usual Turkish word for Greek. “Grek”

29. These churches also served the Russian refugee community that flooded into Istanbul after World War I. That community has now dwindled, leaving the churches to be cared for by the remaining older faithful.

30. Druzhinina, *Kiuchuk-Kainardzhiiskii mir*, pp. 220–24, 296, 348, and article draft (here article 23) on p. 346.

31. Actually, the Russian text says “Greco-Russian,” while the Italian in this instance supports the Turkish “Russo-Greek.” The difference appears to have no significance.

32. Article 16, paragraph 9 of the Kuchuk Kainardji treaty allows the princes of

was an unknown term to Turks; it was something foreign, like the “Ruso-Grek” church which the Turkish text of article 14 said was to be established. If a Greek Orthodox church for the Greek Orthodox people of the Ottoman Empire was to have been established, the Turkish text would undoubtedly have used “Rum” in article 14, also.

This lengthy exposition and textual criticism may seem a work of supererogation. But, in view of the broad interpretations of the treaty that have been quoted earlier, it is useful to establish the fact that the single church about which Russian envoys could make representations to the Sublime Porte was not a Greek but a Russian church—of the Greek rite, to be sure, but a foreign import primarily for Russians. To deduce from this that Russia, under the Kuchuk Kainardji treaty, secured a right of making representation about Greek Orthodox churches or believers in the Ottoman Empire is a giant leap of faith.

If, then, neither article 7 nor article 14 affords any basis for a judgment that Russia had a general right of making representations, or of protection, or of intervention, where could such views have originated? Of the possible answers, three relate to the text of the treaty and to its interpretation in the first year following the signing at Kuchuk Kainardji.

First, three articles of the treaty other than 7 and 14 contain specific promises by the Porte in favor of Christian rights, such as freedom to construct and repair churches. Each of these articles concerns the people of a region which Russian forces had occupied in whole or in part during the war of 1768 to 1774—Moldavia and Wallachia (article 16), the islands of the Archipelago (article 17), and Georgia and Mingrelia (article 23)—and which under the peace terms were to be restored to Ottoman rule. The article on Georgia and Mingrelia further specifies that Russia shall have no right of intervening in their affairs. The article on the islands is silent on this matter, but the article on Moldavia and Wallachia grants to Russia a specific right to make representations on behalf of these principalities, and the Porte promises to take them into consideration. This right of making representations is again precise, limited to the two principalities, but it is far more important than the right to make representations about one church. No general rights within the Ottoman Empire accrued to Russia by article 16, but blurring or deliberate misconstruing of its terms was of course possible in the future—and did happen.

Second, after the treaty was concluded, either Catherine or some close adviser saw an opportunity to give it a new twist, with added emphasis on

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Moldavia and Wallachia to have *chargés d'affaires* in Istanbul, representing their masters at the Porte, who would be Christians “of the Greek religion”—“della Religione Greca” in Italian, “Grecheskago zakona” in Russian, but “Rum mezhebinden” in Turkish.

the rights of Christians in the Ottoman Empire. Though Russia had tried, during the war, to encourage Ottoman Christians and to get support from them in the rear of the Turkish armies, the rights of Christians had played an unimportant role in the peace negotiations compared to such questions as Tatar independence, territorial gains, or navigation rights. Catherine II's original proposals for peace terms included little on Christians.<sup>33</sup> Obreskov added most of the proposals on this matter later. When the treaty was finally concluded, its joyful reception by Catherine was, quite naturally it would seem, because of its political, territorial, and commercial terms, and not because of articles 7 and 14.<sup>34</sup> Yet, in March 1775, shortly after ratifications were exchanged, Catherine issued a manifesto which emphasized the advantages Russia had secured for Christians in the Ottoman Empire. "Our orthodoxy," she proclaimed, "is henceforth under Our Imperial guardianship in the places of its upspringing, protected from all oppression and violence."<sup>35</sup> The manifesto may have been designed chiefly for domestic consumption, to curry favor with the devout, but the implications of this claim of guardianship were plain for future Russian policy toward Turkey. It was the first move in a long and somewhat erratic campaign by Russian officials, culminating in 1853, to misinterpret the treaty of Kuchuk Kainardji.

Third, an additional Russian maneuver, also in 1775, apparently helped to legitimize the claim to a right of protection. The government in St. Petersburg issued an official French translation of the Kuchuk Kainardji treaty.<sup>36</sup> Its version of article 14 said that Russia could build in Beyoğlu "une église publique du rit Grec." This was not quite a lie, but it was not a true translation of the treaty's terms. The Russian church was at a stroke transformed into a Greek church. If the Russian minister in Istanbul was permitted to make representations about a Greek church, less stretching would be needed to contend that he could make representations about *the* Greek church in the

33. Druzhinina, *Kiuchuk-Kainardzhiiskii mir*, pp. 111 and 295; "Exposé confidentiel au Pr. Lobkowitz," May 16, 1771, *SIRIO*, 97 (1896): 286–302; Lord Cathcart to Earl of Halifax, February 18/March 1, 1771, *SIRIO*, 19 (1876): 190–91.

34. Sir R. Gunning to Earl of Suffolk, July 24/August 4, 1774, *SIRIO*, 19:423–24. William Tooke, *Life of Catherine II*, 5th ed., 3 vols. (Dublin, 1800), 2:116–18, evaluates the treaty similarly; see also Norman Itzkowitz and Max Mote, *Mubadele: An Ottoman-Russian Exchange of Ambassadors* (Chicago, 1970), pp. 37–39.

35. Manifesto of March 17, 1775 in *PSZ*, Series 1, vol. 20, no. 14274, pp. 80–81. Druzhinina, *Kiuchuk-Kainardzhiiskii mir*, p. 316, and Kurat, *Türkiye ve Rusya*, p. 30, give a date of March 19, apparently mistaken. The "places of upspringing" might be construed to mean Palestine, but this seems less likely than that it means Constantinople, and generally the lands of the former Byzantine Empire (with Palestine and other parts), now included in the Ottoman Empire.

36. G. F. de Martens gives the French in two editions: *Recueil*, 1st ed., 4:607–38, with notes on pp. 606 and 607 asserting that this is the authorized French version made in Russia and published in St. Petersburg in 1775; and *Recueil*, 2nd ed., 2:286–321, with similar notes.

Ottoman Empire. The hoax was successfully foisted on Europe, since the made-in-Russia French version became the working text of the treaty in the European diplomatic world of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, where French was the common language. To this day the error has persisted, not only in French but in English as well, because the British government translated St. Petersburg's French version into English, and the Foreign Office's English translation has continued to be used by contemporary scholars.<sup>37</sup> The mistranslation may have been innocent, unlikely as that seems, but its potential consequences for misinterpreting the treaty were vast.

An additional explanation of how erroneous judgments about Russia's powers under the treaty gained acceptance goes back to Sorel's publication of *La Question d'Orient au XVIII siècle* in 1878, and through him to Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall in 1832 and, finally, to the Austrian diplomat Franz Thugut in 1774.

Sorel, as has been observed, concluded that the treaty made Russia the protector of Christians throughout the Ottoman Empire, and dramatized this by quoting Thugut's judgment of the treaty including the now-famous phrase about the skill of Russian diplomats and the imbecility of the Turkish negotiators. Sorel cited no source for the Austrian internuncio's dispatches. Much longer extracts from the same dispatches, however, drawn from the Vienna archives, were printed in 1832 as appendixes in the last text volume of Hammer's *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches*, and again in 1839 in its French translation (with some inaccuracies) by J.-J. Hellert.<sup>38</sup> Undoubtedly, the latter is Sorel's source.<sup>39</sup> But Sorel, writing a century after Thugut, used

37. The St. Petersburg French version and the English translation of it are in "Treaties (Political and Territorial) between Russia and Turkey, 1774-1849," in Great Britain, House of Commons, *Sessional Papers*, 1854, vol. 72. This English translation is reproduced in Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East*, 1:54-61, and also in the 2nd edition, revised and enlarged, J. C. Hurewitz, *The Middle East and North Africa in World Politics: A Documentary Record* (New Haven, Conn., 1975- ), 1:92-101. M. S. Anderson, *The Great Powers and the Near East, 1774-1923* (London, 1970 [New York, 1971]), pp. 9-14, uses the same English version. There is a more recent and different translation into English in Fred L. Israel, ed., *Major Peace Treaties of Modern History, 1645-1967*, 4 vols. (New York, 1967), 1:913-29. The source from which the translation was made is not indicated, except that it was a French text (and hence not one of the official treaty languages). But it is certain that the St. Petersburg French text is not the source, since the church in article 14 is called "Russo-Greek." Almost certainly the source is Noradounghian. There are a few errors in translation in this new English version. Curiously, Israel says (p. v) that the reason for translating from French is that no official English translation existed.

38. Hammer, *Geschichte*, 8:577-84; Hammer, *Histoire de l'Empire Ottoman*, 17 vols. (Paris, 1835-41), 16:494-503. On a significant inaccuracy, see n. 46 below.

39. Sorel listed the works he consulted on p. iv of his *Question d'Orient*. Hammer's French edition is among them. Thugut's words as quoted above, from Sorel, pp. 263-64, are nearly identical with those in Hammer, *Histoire*, vol. 16, pp. 500 and 503. But Sorel



the diplomat's words to emphasize the Russian "right" of protecting Ottoman Christians far more than Thugut emphasized this "right" in his original dispatch. "The essential stipulations of the treaty were those which touched on religion," said Sorel.<sup>40</sup> Sorel could look back on the origins of the Crimean War, as Thugut could not, and knew the importance of those stipulations. Thugut did believe these provisions of the treaty to be very important, but his major concern was with the advancing Russian military threat to the Ottoman Empire and to Istanbul itself. It was Sorel who made the direct connection between the alleged Russian right of protectorate over all Ottoman Christians and the alleged skill of the Russian and imbecility of the Turkish negotiators.

But Sorel's most unforgivable error in his use of Thugut was concealing the fact that Thugut had not seen a copy of the treaty of Kuchuk Kainardji when he wrote about it. Thugut was only guessing about the contents. The Porte, Thugut complained in his dispatch of September 3, 1774, had not yet revealed the terms of the treaty. Thugut speculated on possible reasons for the delay, and then added:

However that may be, the little that is known publicly of this treaty suffices to draw from it this conclusion: namely that the whole accumulation of the stipulations is a model of skill on the part of the Russian diplomats and a rare example of imbecility on the part of the Turkish negotiators. . . .

The passage then goes on, about as Sorel quoted it, to say that now the Ottoman Empire had become a sort of Russian province.<sup>41</sup> Why would a competent diplomat make such definitive judgments on a treaty he had not read?

It is only fair to Thugut to point out that his guessing was informed. The Russo-Turkish peace negotiations had gone on sporadically since 1772. Thugut had been physically present at the first peace negotiation, at Focşani, and had been in correspondence with Obreskov during the second round of

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adds a few words that are not in Thugut, fails to indicate his omissions in quoting Thugut, and actually reverses the dates for the two dispatches from which he does quote. He also makes an inconsequential error in copying.

It may be noted that Sorel has been criticized before for deficiencies in research methods and precision. The most telling criticisms apply to the last four volumes of his *L'Europe et la Révolution française*, 8 vols. (Paris, 1895-1904); see especially Raymond Guyot and Pierre Muret, "Etude critique sur 'Bonaparte et le Directoire' par M. Albert Sorel," *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 5, no. 4 (January 15, 1904): 241-64, and no. 5 (February 15, 1904): 313-39. Sorel, nevertheless, still enjoys a considerable reputation. His *Question d'Orient*, almost a century after its appearance, is called "useful" by authors of two of the most recent monographs in that area: Anderson, *Eastern Question*, p. 400, and Saul, *Russia and the Mediterranean*, p. 231.

40. Sorel, *Question d'Orient*, p. 260.

41. Hammer, *Histoire*, 16:500.

Russo-Turkish peace talks in 1772–73 at Bucharest.<sup>42</sup> He knew the prevailing moods in the Ottoman capital. He knew the Russian demands and the Turkish positions on them. But he did not know the final outcome. In the matter of Russian protection of Ottoman Christians, for example, Thugut knew that Obreskov, at Bucharest, had demanded that “moderate representations by the Russian ministers on behalf of the Christian churches be favorably received.”<sup>43</sup> The Turkish negotiators were immediately suspicious, and rightly so, given the plural of “churches.” In the Turkish accounts this overture appears as a Russian demand for a right of protection over all Orthodox believers.<sup>44</sup> Obreskov had then retreated, saying the matter could be omitted from the treaty and only mentioned in the protocols of the negotiations; finally his demand was whittled down to a Russian right of making representations about the one Russian church in Istanbul.<sup>45</sup> Thugut probably knew all of this, but he was fearful, and when he could not learn the exact terms of the Kuchuk Kainardji treaty, he expected the worst. So in his September 3 dispatch he said that “on the strength of common assurance, the right of protection of the schismatic religion is accorded to Russia by a formal stipulation of the treaty.”<sup>46</sup> He was simply wrong.

Thugut was wrong, apparently, because he was so fearful for Austria’s position after the Russian defeat of Turkey. One can understand his fear, given Russia’s gains, for Austria was now faced with a major competitor in the Near East. But Thugut’s reaction to events, set down in this dispatch on which Hammer, Sorel, and many later historians have relied, was almost hysterical. Taking a strongly Catholic view of Russia’s championing of the “schismatic” Orthodox, he foresaw “the suppression and extermination of the Catholic religion in the Levant” unless countermeasures were undertaken. He conjured up a vision of Russian might poised at the northern edge of the Black Sea, able within thirty-six to forty-eight hours to transport by sailing ship an army of 20,000 to the walls of Istanbul, and so to seize that metropolis, helped by the sympathetic Orthodox believers inside, before any European power was aware of the action. The sultan would have to flee to Asia. Then Western Anatolia, the Aegean islands, and Greece west to the Adriatic, “lands blessed by nature, with which no other region in the world can compare in productivity and wealth,” would fall to Russia with schismatic help. Russia

42. Hammer, *Geschichte*, 8:401–3, 415 n.c.

43. Druzhinina, *Kiuchuk-Kainardzhiiskii mir*, p. 221.

44. Hammer, *Geschichte*, 8:412.

45. Druzhinina, *Kiuchuk-Kainardzhiiskii mir*, p. 346, giving Obreskov’s draft article 24.

46. Hammer, *Geschichte*, 8:578. The French edition of Hammer, *Histoire*, 16:495, omits the vital qualifying phrase, “on the strength of common assurance.” Why so sloppy a translation? According to the title page of volume 1 of *Histoire*, J.-J. Hellert made the translation under Hammer’s own direction.

would then be a superpower surpassing any of the greatest monarchies of ancient times. And there is more. It is a fascinating and frightening dispatch, but hardly good reporting.<sup>47</sup>

Thugut's credentials as a prophet were cast in doubt not only by this vision but also by his prediction in the same dispatch that there would doubtless be no future Russo-Turkish wars along the Danube, since Russia could hereafter act so swiftly by sea. In actuality, five such land wars followed in a century.<sup>48</sup> In some ways Thugut had, by 1774, already become the prisoner of his own predictions. He and his Prussian diplomatic colleague at Istanbul had been shunted out of a mediating role in the Russo-Turk peace negotiations in 1772 by the Russians, whose demands on Turkey then increased. As the negotiations broke down in the spring of 1773, and the Turkish position did not improve, Thugut began to predict that the skill of the Russians would lead to their effective dominion over the Ottoman Empire.<sup>49</sup> Before he even knew that a treaty was finally being negotiated, he predicted that Russian skill would somehow get a right of protection over the Greek religion into the treaty, and that this would have melancholy consequences for Catholicism in the Near East; he bemoaned the weakness and imbecility of the Ottoman government.<sup>50</sup> His judgment of September 3, 1774, on the treaty, seems then to be at least in part a self-fulfilled prophecy.

If Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall had not adopted Thugut's views and reprinted parts of his dispatches in his *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches*, the affirmation by some historians of Russia's "right" of protecting Orthodox believers in the Ottoman Empire might have been less categorical. Hammer did not endorse all of Thugut's statements, but he did endorse those dealing specifically with the alleged Russian protectorate. One wonders why, but there is no completely satisfactory answer. Obviously, Hammer clearly saw that Kuchuk Kainardji was, in general, a disaster for the Turks. He may also have been influenced by his later knowledge that the Russian government had indeed at times advanced pretensions of being the protector of Ottoman Christians.

In addition, Hammer may have been influenced by his friendship with Thugut. These two men were both Habsburg state servants. They were among the earliest and most brilliant of Austrian orientalist trained in the new

47. Hammer, *Geschichte*, 8:577–82.

48. There were such Russo-Turkish wars in 1787–92, 1806–12, 1828–29, 1853–54, and 1877–78. According to Philip E. Mosely, *Russian Diplomacy and the Opening of the Eastern Question in 1838 and 1839* (Cambridge, Mass., 1934), p. 7, the Russian fleet sixty years after Kuchuk Kainardji was still ninety-six hours' sail from the Straits.

49. Thugut's dispatch of May 3, 1773, partly quoted in Hammer, *Geschichte*, 8:412, n. a, and 446, n. b.

50. Thugut's dispatch of July 18, 1774, *ibid.*, pp. 582–83.

oriental academy in Vienna. Thugut, the older (1739–1818), became foreign minister and, as such, gave Hammer (1774–1856) his first appointment in 1799—as “Sprachknabe” at the Habsburg internuntiate in Istanbul, to perfect his Turkish. Between 1802 and 1816, Hammer was a frequent guest at Thugut’s table in Vienna, and the two often talked at great length. Hammer eclipsed Thugut as an orientalist, but, until Thugut’s death, evidently regarded him as a patron.<sup>51</sup> For whatever reason, Hammer accepted Thugut’s view on the Russian protectorate of Christians.

So the connecting links in the chain emerge: Thugut judged a treaty before he knew its exact terms, Hammer endorsed and reprinted the judgment, Hellert translated Hammer although not quite accurately, Sorel quoted Hellert’s translation although with a significant omission and with different emphasis, and a number of historians over the past century have relied on Sorel. As a final note to this chain of garbled transmission, it might be pointed out that Thugut’s phrase as quoted in Hammer’s original German edition was: “a rare example of Russian skill and Turkish imbecility.” Russian diplomats and Turkish negotiators were not mentioned!<sup>52</sup>

Perhaps the best antidote to Thugut’s misinterpretation of the treaty of Kuchuk Kainardji is the judgment of his most eminent successor as Habsburg foreign minister, Prince Metternich. After the Greek revolt against Ottoman rule in 1821 had again opened up the Eastern Question, Russia advanced pretensions to a right of intervention in the Ottoman Empire’s Balkan provinces. Metternich made an analysis of the Russo-Turkish treaties, Kuchuk Kainardji the most important among them, to discover what legal basis the Russian pretensions had. This meticulous recapitulation of treaty terms, still in the Vienna archives, shows that the Porte had made promises about the rights of Christians in specifically limited areas—the islands of the Archipelago and the Danubian principalities—and that Russia had a right to make repre-

51. Joseph Freiherr von Hammer-Purgstall, “Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben, 1774–1852,” in *Fontes Rerum Austriacarum*, sec. 2, vol. 70 (Vienna, 1940), pp. 35–38, 132, 174–76, 209, 233, 245. See also Constant von Würzbach, *Biographisches Lexikon des Kaiserthums Oesterreich*, 60 vols. (Vienna, 1856–91), 7:267–89, on Hammer. On Franz Maria Freiherr von Thugut, see *ibid.*, 45:1–6. Hammer was sometimes critical of Thugut, as he was of everyone, but in an appendix in his *Geschichte*, 8:577, he introduces extracts from Thugut’s reports as proof of judgments in the text of the *Geschichte* on Thugut’s “diplomatic skill and correct view of affairs.” Hammer states that the extracts will not be unwelcome to “political readers.”

52. Hammer, *Geschichte*, 8:582. Turkish accounts, curiously, speak of “idiocy” or “stupidity” of the second Turkish negotiator at Kuchuk Kainardji, but this because he was said himself to have raised the question of indemnity payments to Russia after the treaty was completed and agreed on, thus costing the Turks 15,000 purses of *akçe* (4,500,000 rubles). One account says the stupidity occurred when the delegate awoke from an “elbow nap” and introduced the indemnity subject to cover up the fact he had been dozing, I. H. Danişmend, *İzahlî Osmanlı tarihi kronolojisi*, 4 vols. (Istanbul, 1947–55), 4:58.

sentations about the latter only. In addition, the Porte had made, in article 7, one general promise: "to protect constantly the Christian religion and its Churches." Metternich's analysis dismisses the rest of that article with the curt observation that it "relates to the new church in Constantinople, construction of which is authorized in article XIV." There was nothing general about it.<sup>53</sup> Metternich's dissection of the treaty revealed that the Sublime Porte, not the Emperor of all the Russias, was the protector of Ottoman Christians.

If there is need for any further debate on Russian rights concerning Ottoman Christians in general, under the treaty of Kuchuk Kainardji, it can logically involve only the one general promise that the Turkish government made. Clearly, the Porte was the Christians' protector.<sup>54</sup> Russia, under this provision, received no right of making representations, no right of protection, and no right of intervention. But the promise by the Porte was made in a bilateral treaty with Russia. Was this a recognition that Russia had some sort of special interest in the situation of Ottoman Christians? In the crisis of 1853 leading to the Crimean War, the Ottoman government said the treaty conferred no such special interest.<sup>55</sup> Count Nesselrode, the Russian chancellor, said it did.<sup>56</sup> He and the tsar had been expanding on that claim during the first six months of 1853. But Nesselrode had not informed himself very well on the terms of Russo-Turkish treaties, and after the war started the tsar confessed that he also had been badly informed. "He had been misled," said Nicholas I, "as to the rights which were secured to him by the Treaty of Kainardji and . . . his conduct would have been different but for the error into which he had been led."<sup>57</sup> This is not the place to begin a reinvestigation

53. Metternich to Prince Esterhazy (London), March 17, 1822, and enclosure 4, "Dispositions des Traités entre la Russie et la Porte, relativement aux Chrétiens /: Grecs:/ habitans des Provinces Européennes de l'Empire Ottoman," in Haus- Hof- und Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Staatskanzlei, England, Kart. 166, Korr. Weisungen. Metternich's analysis included nothing on Ottoman Asian territories but did include provisions of the Treaty of Bucharest (1812). Paul Schroeder, *Metternich's Diplomacy at its Zenith* (New York, 1969), p. 188, n. 80, refers to Metternich's analysis but gives the dispatch date erroneously as April 24, 1822.

54. Zinkeisen, *Geschichte*, 5:3, interprets this clause as promising religious freedom in the Ottoman Empire simply for Russian subjects. So narrow an interpretation cannot be sustained by the language.

55. Reshid to Musurus (London), August 25, 1853, in *Diş-İşleri Bakanlığı Hazine-i Evrak* (Foreign Ministry Archives, Istanbul), dosya 609.

56. A. M. Zaionchkovskii, *Vostochnaia voina 1853-1856 gg. . . .*, 4 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1908-13), *Prilozheniia*, 1:449-50, circular of May 30/June 11, 1853.

57. Nesselrode's circular, cited in n. 56, makes a flat misstatement about Russia's rights, particularly under the 1829 treaty of Adrianople. The tsar's admission, probably made originally to Count Orlov, is reported in Sir Hamilton Seymour (St. Petersburg) to Clarendon #176, February 21, 1854, Secret and Confidential, in Public Record Office (London), FO 65/445. G. B. Henderson, *Crimean War Diplomacy* (Glasgow, 1947), p.

of the rather involved controversy of 1853 that led to the Russo-Turkish war of that year. But the tsar's statement does serve as an additional reminder that the Russian claims of 1853 cannot quite be taken at face value. Instead, the investigation must go back to the treaty terms themselves, and especially to consideration of whether any general right of protection devolved upon Russia from the fact that the Porte promised in a bilateral treaty "a firm protection to the Christian religion and its churches."<sup>58</sup>

Russia did receive under the treaty, as has been shown, some specific rights to act within the Ottoman Empire on behalf of Christians. The rights were three: to build one Russo-Greek church in Istanbul, to make diplomatic representations about that one church and those who served it, and to make similar representations about the Christians of Moldavia and Wallachia. These fairly narrow provisions might of course be advanced as a *pretext* for subsequent pretensions to larger rights of representation, protection, or intervention. But they obviously do not provide a sound *basis* for expanded claims. Those historians who, over the years, have repeated the old claim that the Kuchuk Kainardji treaty granted Russia broad rights of protection or representation are clearly wrong. Those who have affirmed Russian rights of a more limited character are closer to the truth.

The verdict that the treaty of Kuchuk Kainardji exhibited Russian skill and Ottoman imbecility also merits a jaundiced eye. Russian skill was exhibited, although not quite so much as has been claimed. Sorel and others have pointed to what they perceive as a skillful scattering of related articles—especially the separation of articles 7 and 14 that dealt with the church in Constantinople, as if to conceal the connection from the Turks and the world. But in the original Russian treaty proposal the two articles were juxtaposed! Druzhinina finds no proof that either party tried to hoodwink the other "by a disorderly piling up of articles" during the negotiations, and suggests that possibly the Turks separated article 7 from article 14 to weaken the public impact in Istanbul of the concessions they were forced to make.<sup>59</sup> There was

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10, cites this dispatch (first noted in his article in *History*, October, 1933); Temperley, *England and the Near East*, p. 469, also refers to it.

58. It might be possible to argue that Russia needed no treaty basis at all to act as protector of Ottoman Christians, and that "might made right." This argument, which will not be pursued here, is suggested by some Russian statements of 1853. Baron Brunnow, the tsar's ambassador to London, wrote privately to Prince Menshikov and Count Nesselrode: "Russia is strong, Turkey is weak, that is the preamble of all our treaties." F. F. de Martens, ed., *Recueil des traités et conventions conclus par la Russie*, 15 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1874-1909), 12:311, letter of March 21/April 2, 1853. Nesselrode himself wrote soon after: "Russia's right rests on an incontestable fact: 50 million Orthodox Russians cannot remain indifferent to the fate of 12 million Orthodox subjects of the Sultan." Nesselrode to Brunnow, April 20 (presumably O. S., hence May 2), 1853, *ibid.*, p. 318.

59. Druzhinina, *Kiuchuk-Kainardzhiiskii mir*, pp. 278 and 346.



even some stupidity on the part of the Russians, for their recognition of the Ottoman sultan as rightful caliph of the new independent Crimean Khanate caused great trouble which had to be corrected later in the convention of Aynali Kavak in 1779.<sup>60</sup> Ottoman imbecility was also exhibited—less, however, in the final peace negotiation at Kuchuk Kainardji than in the lack of courage to make peace earlier in the war when a better bargain could have been obtained. During the peace negotiations of 1772–73 and again in 1774, the Ottomans saw to it that no general right of representation or protection was allowed to Russia, but only the three rights specified above. The real Ottoman stupidity was to have gone to war over the Polish question and, once irrevocably at war, to have been defeated in the field.

Thugut's verdict that the treaty of Kuchuk Kainardji exhibited Russian skill and Turkish imbecility has been a good story for two centuries. Sorel's account has enhanced the story for the past ninety-eight years. Now it is time for a change.

60. Text in G. F. de Martens, *Recueil*, 2nd ed., 2:653–61; Noradounghian, *Recueil*, 1:338–44.