

BUCHAREST DURING THE PEACE OF 1812

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Abstract: *The year 1812 remains in the history of the Romanian Principalities as the year when the peace treaty to end the Russian-Turkish war is signed. Bessarabia was acquired by the Russian Empire from Moldavia as a consequence of the warfare. The peace treaty was signed in Bucharest, at Manuc's Inn, who was owned by Manuc Bei. He was an important Armenian merchant in Bucharest, who played a key role during the negotiation. The diplomats who participated in the peace have left travel journals depicting aspects of the city organization, how the peace talks were held and the role of the host in preparing the discussion sessions. This article describes the city, using testimonies left by Count Langeron Andrault, by the Russian general Mihail Kutuzov and by the English Attached Ambassador at the Ottoman Empire, Sir Robert Thomas Wilson. It article also encompasses diplomatic and consular reports from the volume *Consular and Diplomatic English Reports about the Danubian Principalities, 1800-1812*, coordinated by the historian Paul Cernovodeanu and from the "Hurmuzaki" collection of documents. The purpose of the research is to analyze the following aspects: the image of the city, the impact of the peace organization on residents, the role played by Manuc Bei in the negotiations and the consequences of the peace treaty on the local population.*

Keywords: *Peace of 1812, Manuc Bei, Manuc's Inn, Alexandre Langeron, Mihail Kutuzov, Sir Robert Thomas Wilson.*

The Balkans represented between the 18th and 19th century an area of interest for three expanding empires in Central and South-Eastern Europe: Russian Empire, the Ottoman Empire and the Habsburg Empire. The Romanian Principalities, due to their position at the crossroads of these three powers, were a theatre of war and they acted as exchange coins between neighbours. The fate of the Principalities has been following this pattern during the Russo-Turkish War of 1806-1812. In the first stage of the conflict, due to the Russian occupation, they were

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transformed into a venue point on Russian troops. After the Peace concluded in Bucharest, the territory of Moldavia was dismembered in favour of victorious Russia, which enclosed the region between the Prut and Dniester, now known as Bessarabia.

As a radiography of the events between 1806-1812 at the edge of Europe, it can be said that “This war was the longest military conflict between the these two great empires, worn on two theatres of military operations – the Danube and the Caucasus (secondary), but it was mainly represented by the diplomatic disputes, including secret diplomacy, than by the military confrontations. It was a war between the three Ottoman sultans (Selim III, 1789-1807; Mustafa IV, 1807-1808, Mahmud II, 1808-1839) and the ambitious Alexander I (1801-1825), behind which stood the ubiquitous Napoleon I Bonaparte”¹.

This paper is not focused on the presentation of the military and political events of 1812, but on the Romanian capital city, which has become the place for the peace negotiations.

The cause of the conflict was apparently simple, as recorded in his memoirs by Admiral Paul Ciceagov²: the dismissals from the Romanian Principalities of the rulers – Ypsilanti in Wallachia and Moruzi in Moldavia by the Ottoman Empire – thus breaking the treaty signed with Russia, where it was stated that households were appointed for 7 years. Also an unofficial reason was the attraction of Turkey in Napoleon’s projects against Russia³.

Along with military events, peace talks began in November 1811 in Giurgiu, at which attended among others the following: Andrei Italinski⁴, Ivan Vasilici Sabaneev, Joseph Fonton⁵, Anthony Fonton, Peter Fonton, Bobrov, from the Russian side and Selim, Hamid and Galib-Efendi⁶, from the Ottoman Empire’s part. At the thirteenth meeting on 21st of November / 2nd of December, 1811, the representatives of the Gate proposed Prut River as border between the two empires and that the Ottoman Empire to continue to possess the cities Chilia and Ismail.

¹ Mischevca, 2012, 17 - 22.

² He was appointed in April 1812 Danube army commander by Tsar Alexander I in order to speed up the peace and organize the withdrawal of Russian troops from the territory of the Principalities.

³ Bezviconi, 1947, 182.

⁴ He was the Russian ambassador in Constantinople, during Tsar Alexander I (1801-1825).

⁵ He was advisor and translator (*dragoman*) for the Russian embassy from Constantinople.

⁶ He was the head of Turkish plenipotentiaries.

Unfortunately, there was not an agreement between the two parties, due to the fact that the “the return to the initial discussion on the European side of the border (Siret and Prut) was considered contrary to Russian friendship and M. Kutuzov⁷ himself, being quite surprised, remained very pained”⁸.

Negotiations were moved to Bucharest after one month⁹. They were advancing slowly, due to different views as regarded the border between the two empires. The prerequisites of peace were signed on 5th/17th of May 1812, after many sessions and confidential meetings¹⁰. The following points were specified in the six articles accepted by both Kutuzov from Russia and Ahmed Pasha from the Ottoman Empire: the border between the two countries was established on the Prut River, Chilia arm was common, Ismail and Chilia fortresses were to be demolished and Russia was obliged not to build in their place other fortifications, the Caucasian border remains as they were before the war, the Serbians received general amnesty and the right to autonomy, the conventions of privileges before the War for Wallachia and Moldavia were again available¹¹. The last article mentioned the start of the final peace negotiations that took place immediately after the signing of the preliminaries. It has been scarcely applied on 16th/28th of May 1812, when the peace treaty was officially signed at Manuc’s Inn. The treaty had 16 base articles and 2 remained confidential¹². Regarding the fate of the Romanian Principalities, it decided that the territory between the Prut and Dniester (Bessarabia) is annexed by the Russian Empire. Note that the peace was not underwritten by Kutuzov, or vizier Ahmed Pasha, although they were in town. Among the signers were from the Turkish side Galib Edendi, Zade-Ibrahim, Selim Efendi and Abdul-Hamid Efendi, and from the Russian Italinski, Sabaneev and Joseph Fonton¹³. The

⁷ He was appointed commander of Ismail fortress. He served as Russia's ambassador to Constantinople in 1791 and he was among the favorites Tsar Paul I. He ordered the Russian troops during the Russo-Turkish War of 1806-1812 and he was replaced in April 1812 by Admiral Ciceagov as the Tsar held responsible for the delay in signing the peace.

⁸ Jaruțchi, Mischevca, 1992, 146-147.

⁹ Iorga, 1912, 144-148.

¹⁰ At these negotiations took part only the Russian supreme commander Kutuzov, the Russian State Councilor Joseph Fonton and Galib Efendi (from the Ottoman side).

¹¹ Jaruțchi, Mischevca, 1992, 162-163.

¹² Jaruțchi, Mischevca, 174 – 175.

¹³ Bezviconi, 1938, 24.

minutes of the final meeting were drafted by Alexandru Sturdza¹⁴, whose father, Scarlat Sturdza, received the Governor of the province of Bessarabia¹⁵.

The participants at this political event recorded impressions of capital and especially about the Manuc's Inn, where they conducted the negotiations and finally signed peace.

The owner of the inn is a controversial figure in history, playing an important role in the economical and political life from Wallachia. He was born in 1769, at Rusciuc, in a family of Armenian merchants. Many aspects of commerce he learned from an Armenian trader in Iasi, where he was sent by his father. In 1785 he returned to Rusciuc, where he was among the richest people, and lent money to even the governor of the city, Tersenicli-Oglu. Because of the wealth he collects, he creates relationships in elite circles, borrowing with large sums of money important personalities, like Bairactar Vizier and the ruler of Wallachia, Constantin Ypsilanti. In this context is easy to understand how he receives some noble titles from Ypsilanti: in 1802 he becomes sirdar (*serdar*) and in 1803 cupbearer (*paharnic*)¹⁶. During this time, he acquires land in Bucharest, including the former prisons and some properties from the Old Court that were on sale¹⁷. In their place he started the building of an inn “which becomes one of the most famous inns from Bucharest from the first half of 19th century”¹⁸.

Manuc is used by both sides during the Russo-Turkish War of 1806-1812: Sultan Selim III and Grand Vizier Bairactar receive loans from him and the Russian commander Kutuzov receives information. According to Gheorghe Bezviconi, “Manuc Bei was the man who decreases the French influence; he was a friend of Galib-Efendi, the head of Turkish plenipotentiaries and he was the organizer of intimate festivals for emissaries”¹⁹. He was rewarded by both empires because of his activity: in 1809 he became translator holder to the Ottoman Empire, and a year later he received the decoration Cross of Saint Vladimir gr. III. As

¹⁴ He studied history, theology and philosophy in Germany. He entered into diplomacy with the help of Capodistria, capturing the attention and appreciation of Tsar Alexander I, who sent as a delegate to negotiate peace both in Bucharest in 1812 and at the Congress of Vienna 1815.

¹⁵ Bezviconi, 1938, 24; Bezviconi, 1943, 48.

¹⁶ Bezviconi, 1938, 15-20.

¹⁷ These places have been sold out since 1798 by Prince Constantine Hangerli, who needed revenue to cover the investment made to become a leader in Wallachia.

¹⁸ Bezviconi, 1938, 20.

¹⁹ Bezviconi, 1938, 24.

appears from a report on August 30, 1811, Manuc Bei played a dual role, because he was also mandated by the Turks to treat for peace with the Russians, the latter enjoying a huge consideration²⁰. In fact, the peace was standing in the way Manuc directed negotiations between the two empires. In 1815 he moved to Kishinev, in Bessarabia, where he raised a mansion at Hâncești. He passed away here, two years later²¹.

During the war, the Manuc's houses from Podul Târgului din Afară were exempted from requisition, which has facilitated their transformation since 1808 in a "diplomatic premise" where different Russian and Ottoman officials were hosted²². The inn had a similar status, because some officials were hosted here and the peace negotiations were kept here. This accomplishment lasted only a year, since a document from 1804 states the purchase of shops inside the inn. Initially it was called Old Court Inn (*Hanul Curții Vechi*)²³. It was a magnet for Western travellers: having carved arches, wide staircases and ornaments above doors and windows. Illustrating traditional Romanian style, it was totally different from the other inns in town, that were imitations of Italian style, *i fondacchi*: "The two verandas supported by wooden pillars, balconies on the second floor, the stairs gave a great turn north façade of the inn, rhythm from sin II arches and tall, wavy shingle roof, all these architectural elements, stucco twin masters of fine sculptures modelled and columns embroidery, printed building an atmosphere of peace and rest that comes from the harmony of shapes and volumes"²⁴. The inn was a "mixture of dirt and luxury and opulence indolence"²⁵. Various officials were hosted in the inn's suites during the peace negotiations. Among them we can mention: the Turkish envoy, Numan Efendi and Count Italinski, Russian ambassador in Constantinople²⁶. The Russian general Kutuzov spent his free time at the inn's restaurant in an oriental atmosphere.

The discussions from the 15th of December 1811 were held in the right wing of the inn and the signing of the treaty took place in the inn's reception hall on 16th/28th of May 1812²⁷. On this occasion, the buildings in the city centre were decorated with garlands, and at night, the bridges

²⁰ Bezviconi, 1938, 24.

²¹ Grigoruță, Ioniță, Marcu, 2005, 7.

²² Ionescu, 1976, 110.

²³ Ionescu, 1976, 32-34.

²⁴ Ionescu, 1976, 33-34.

²⁵ Ionescu, 1976, 151.

²⁶ Ionescu, 1976, 147.

²⁷ Ionescu, 1976, 154-158.

were illuminated following the orders given by the Russian commandment. The author of this decoration was none other than Alexander Sturzu: “A fig tree branch shone forth: <<Semper colatur et vigeat>>... In her right hand, the lodestar: <<luceat orbi>>, and to the left, crescent: <<crescat unita>>”²⁸.

Contrary to the expectations, the population reaction to the peace decisions was peaceful, residents not knowing its content. They were happy that they escaped the war and the foreign occupation. Russian evacuation was done a few months after the signing of peace, in October.

The Bucharest image of this period can be reconstructed from memories of the foreign travellers. In this case are being relevant the journal of the French General from Russian army, Alexandre Langeron, Kutuzov's letters and the *Private Diary of Travels* written by the British General, Sir Robert Thomas Wilson.

The French general, Alexandre Andrault Langeron, focuses on the military and diplomatic aspects of the conflict along with issues on the behaviour of Russian soldiers that arrived in the Principalities. His attention was kept by the corrupt officials that came to make fortune and taste the luxury. Most of them were Greeks from Fanar, established in Bucharest, which influenced the residents in a negative way with their habits. The governors appointed by various means less honest were interested in the town's luxury, squandering their fortune quickly. After this, they tried to obtain a new job and the cycle repeated. This landscape is complemented by local boyars – a mixture of Greeks and Romanians. The War of 1806-1812 showed even more duplicitous character of the elite who seek the protection of the occupants or of the French or Constantinople agents. Also from Langeron, we find that Wallachia is divided into districts, each of them being headed by an *ispavnic*²⁹, a job that brings an income of about 7000-8000 ducats a year. The head of Bucharest police was called *aga* and it was considered a help of thieves, because after Langeron, he would conceal the thefts³⁰.

An eternal objector of the system imposed by the Russian with the occupation of the Principalities, it highlights the mistakes made by the tsarist administration: “By occupying the two provinces, our Court has committed an unforgivable mistake, with fatal consequences; the mistake was represented by the fact that we haven't kept their privileges, we have

²⁸ Bezviconi, 1938, 25-26.

²⁹ He had both administrative functions and legal and tax, being basically a governor the County who had been appointed.

³⁰ Filitti *et alii*, 2004, 335 – 336.

let them theirs disastrous administration and we have not set a provisional government as the Austrians did in 1788. [...] Under the direction of rulers, abuses are still smaller and sometimes repressed louder than in the time the two countries were under the Russians domination. But because the Russian government is always too lenient, boyars have never known any bridle and unfortunately, they were able to buy protection from the ones who surrounded the generals or even among the generals themselves. Resulting from inexcusable blindness, boyars have let go to their immorality and to their villainy shamelessly and without fear of punishment”³¹.

He presents also the political preferences of the boyars in Bucharest, grouped in multiple packs where everyone was, ultimately, the enemy of the other and vice versa. Receiving a job by a boyar quickly becomes a reason of conflict with the others, even if they are relatives. For the French general the social elite of the Bucharest is only a set of corrupt individuals without any moral qualities that arrived on various functions using obscure means. This impression is extended to both Principalities³².

Langeron considers the move of the peace talks from Giurgiu to Bucharest a mistake, because the Turks attitude changed. A staunch critic of the Russian commander Kutuzov known for his libertine lifestyle, the French considered Giurgiu too boring for the Russian, where he would have been deprived of the pleasures offered by the Wallachia’s capital³³. The Russian transformed his residence from Bucharest into a real brothel, whose mistress was madam Giuliano, a wife of a Romanian boyar³⁴. On this occasion, we learn and how the local elite interacted with the Russian administration, during the Kutuzov administration. Starting with 1811, using lady Giuliano, many Romanian boyars were able to obtain administrative jobs in Wallachia: Count Dudescu – General Governor of Oltenia and boyar Filipescu - Bucharest aga. These appointments were not long since Wallachia’s government was changed again in hopes of a better organization and supply. Langeron was among the contributors to these changes and he hoped to improve the situation, but this was difficult, because “the new administration found the country ruined with

³¹ Filitti *et alii*, 2004, 336.

³² Filitti *et alii*, 2004, 337 – 339.

³³ Filitti *et alii*, 2004, 354.

³⁴ Filitti *et alii*, 2004, 355.

a 500,000 piasters duty and without possibility to pay or to prevent military needs in case of war”³⁵.

Fortunately, the much desired peace was signed after nearly half a year of negotiations. Originally an enigma for the French, it was clear that the end of the conflict between the two empires was determined by the Tsarist’s army reorganization in the context of Napoleon's campaigns – the Russians “were afraid if the war continues, we will be forced to use against the Turks a lot of our troops needed in vain, giving thus Napoleon more opportunities to destroy our power and afterwards that of the Crescent”³⁶.

Information about the economic life and about the measures taken by the Russian government in Bucharest can be found in letters addressed by the Russian Field Marshal Mikhail Kutuzov Ilarionovici, the tsarist army commander of Principalities in 1811 to various Russian officers.

In his letter to N.P. Rumyantsev from 1st of June 1811, Kutuzov records that, in the capital, shops, numbering 2981, were divided into four classes by the Divan (central administration of the city): 2215 belonged Romanians, 126 to French, 172 to Austrians and 268 to Russians. Initially, the tax rate was fixed depending on the quality and quantity of goods sold, requiring annual gathering of 98,410 lei. Finally, it was considered a fixed amount for each shop. Those who opposed the new pay tribute were chastised: the shop was closed. They were forbidden to do trade anymore and they were placed under the supervision of Agia in order not to trade in secret. If a merchant was caught illegally selling merchandise, his business was seized, the goods were sold at the public fair, and the proceeds deposited in the treasury. The imposition of this new tax caused tension between the Russian government, on one hand, and Austria and France, on the other, since the subjects of these powers enjoyed certain privileges in the Principalities, including some tax exemption³⁷. From a subsequent letter, dated on 10th of June 1811, we find that the tax on the shops was not paid equally by all merchants, despite the initial decisions. The most advantaged were the French, who received “the weighted price [...] that are happy both the consul and the townsmen”³⁸.

³⁵ Filitti *et alii*, 2004, 358.

³⁶ Filitti *et alii*, 2004, 359.

³⁷ Filitti *et alii*, 2004, 420 – 423.

³⁸ Filitti *et alii*, 2004, 426.

On the 7th of August 1811, Kutuzov shows to general Steter³⁹ one of the Bucharest's most sensitive issues, *the quartering*, which generated discontent among the population, with the poor being the most disadvantaged. Although initially were affected by this measure only native habitants, Kutuzov extended it to the foreigners, removing a considerable number of privileges exemption. The process has not been received favourably, mainly due to Agia abuse. Therefore, to improve the situation and avoid a riot, it proposes "to completely exempt owners [...] like in the first case: if the owner has two houses and one is taken entirely from the hospital barracks or other military needs; in the second case: if the owner has a large family and you will be convinced personally that he is unable to provide entirely a room or two"⁴⁰.

In the same document Kutuzov brings into attention the petitions written by residents of Bucharest who do not agree to pay the fee for street pavement, if their homes were not having street access⁴¹. He advises Steter not to consider their complaints, since the measure is in "the benefit of all citizens"⁴².

Observer of society where he had been introduced, Kutuzov recorded some aspects of daily life. From his correspondence with Lisanka, we find the impression left by the capital of Wallachia - "a city so large that surpasses all Russian cities except the capital. Across the bustling crowds [...]"⁴³. In this landscape, Kutuzov noticed the variety of women-some of them with modern customs and culture, other beautiful, more but also some Russian women "full of pretensions"⁴⁴. We find that there is a growing interest for balls, as a place of socialization and recreation, but also for drama. He reminded the Polish theatre, found by Ms. Bennigsen terrible and splendid by Countess Manteuffel⁴⁵.

These changes from the Bucharest society are due the tsarist army officers who led women emancipation and modernization. Relevant in this regard is the description of one of the balls from 1810 hosted by the boyar Constantin Filipescu where Western influence can be seen: besides the Moldavian Cotnar makes its way the famous Bordeaux, the oriental

³⁹ He was appointed military governor in Bucharest, while Kutuzov has gone to Giurgiu.

⁴⁰ Filitti *et alii*, 2004, 426.

⁴¹ There was a local law which provides for payment only ones who had the house bordering the street.

⁴² Filitti *et alii*, 2004, 427.

⁴³ Bezviconi, 1947, 176.

⁴⁴ Bezviconi, 1947, 178.

⁴⁵ Bezviconi, 1947, 179.

dances are left past and replaced the European, most of them from Paris, the oriental clothes gave way to dresses and tuxedo⁴⁶.

Some aspects of the townspeople can be found in the *Private Diary of Travels* written by the British General Sir Robert Thomas Wilson, who is sent on 27th of July 1812 by Ottoman Empire to implement the provisions of the peace concluded on 16th/28th of May 1812. From his point of view, the capital is “a delightful city, if streets were not paved with logs”⁴⁷. In the same manner with Kutuzov, he presents the women from Bucharest, who wear funny clothes with many ornaments and are used to being admired: “I have never read about the beauty of the women of Wallachia, but they are of known and feared rival of the institutions of Venus”⁴⁸. He notes the hospitality, being invited to an epicurean lunch with a variety of well-cooked dishes⁴⁹. For Wilson the most attractive places from the city are the boyars’ houses and the public places for walking.

From the above sources, it appears that there isn’t more information about the organization of the city, but more impressions, which differ from one author to another, depending on the experience that had a space and provenance. During the Russian occupation, Hartingh officer creates a detailed plan of the city, marking the major buildings and 113 churches (which is a very large number)⁵⁰. Anything of this issue is not recorded by any of the travellers mentioned above. Also some information does not reflect objective reality, for example the number of shops that Kutuzov mentioned in one of his letters that does not correspond to what emerged from the 1810/1811 census – only 914 merchants are mentioned in the 5 out of the existing 7 divisions⁵¹.

There are some common elements captured by the three travellers: large influence of the Greeks from Fanar, come to make wealth, burdensome taxes that the population was not intending to pay, the women’s charm and their desire for emancipation and modernization fuelled by soldiers with Western origin from the Russian army. These are irreversible trend towards modernization and contribute to creating a different mentality, which leads to decrease of the Ottoman influence in the lifestyle and in the fashion in the coming decades.

⁴⁶ Ionescu, 1976.138 – 139.

⁴⁷ Filitti *et alii*, 2004, 556.

⁴⁸ Filitti *et alii*, 2004, 557.

⁴⁹ Filitti *et alii*, 2004, 557.

⁵⁰ Giurescu, 2009, 491.

⁵¹ Cernovodeanu, Panait, Gavrilă, 1990, 705 – 723.

The information provided is especially useful in order to understand how people in Bucharest were perceived by foreigners. It is also useful because it permits us to restore some of the aspects of life during the course of peace talks held in Bucharest.

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