P. A. TOLSTOY: THE LIFE OF A RUSSIAN AMBASSADOR IN ISTANBUL IN A HISTORICAL –FICTIONAL CONTEXT (1702-1714)\textsuperscript{1}

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Abstract

The correspondence of Russian diplomats-ambassadors ("stateynıye spiski") and the notes of travelers, who were in search of new territories, give place not only to sacred places and relics of Christianity, but also to impressions about Istanbul. With the political and commercial relations between Russia and Turkey getting stronger in the 18th century, Petro the Great had to assign an experienced diplomat, who would be in good terms with the Ottoman administrators. Petr Andreyevich Tolstoy, chosen by the tsar, performs his missions successfully between 1702-1714 in Turkey. The 12 years period with highly intense relations and difficulties becomes the centre of attention for Russian historians and writers. In our study, the time that Petr Andreyevich Tolstoy spent in Ottoman fields and in Istanbul are studied, depending on the reports of the ambassadors in state archives, the historical-fictional work of investigator N. Pavlenko “Vokrug Trona. Ptentsi gnezda Petrova. Strasti u trona (Tahtın Çevresi. Petro Yuvasının Kuşları. Tahtın Çevresinde Dönên Tutkular)” tarihSEL-kurgusal yapıtına ve Y. Fedorov’un Poruçaet Rossiya (Rusya Göreve Çağrıyor) adlı romanına dayanarak incelenmiştir. Adı geçen iki kaynak ise Tolstoy’un Rusya’daki Sefaret erkänına gönderdiği raporlarında ve Osmanlı Ülkesindeki Halkın Durumu (Sostoyanie naroda turetskogo) adlı çalışmasındaki tarihsel nesnel gereçeye uygun olarak hazırlanmıştır.

Keywords: P.A.Tolstoy, Turkey, travel notes, Istanbul.

1. Introduction

In addition to sacred places and relics of the Christian world, observations on Istanbul were also included in the embassy correspondences of the Russian diplomats ("stateAILY spiski") and the notes of travellers who seek new lands. When political and commercial relations between Russia and Turkey densified in the 18th century, Petro I had to choose an

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experienced diplomat who would adapt to Ottoman administers. The ambassador chosen by the Tsar, Pyotr Andreyevich Tolstoy carried out his mission in Turkey successfully between 1702 and 1714. These 12 years which was full of dense relations and difficulties became a centre of interest for both Russian historians and writers. In this study, the time Pyotr Andreyevich Tolstoy spent in the Ottoman soil and İstanbul was discussed based on the reports of the ambassador in State Archives, researcher Nikolai Pavlenko’s historical-fiction Vokrug Trona. Ptentsi gnezda Petrova. Strasti u trona (Around Throne. Birds of Petro Nest. Passions around the Throne) and Y. Federov’s novel Poruçaet Rossiya (Russia is Calling for Duty). These two sources were written in accordance with the historical objective facts in Tolstoy’s reports to the Embassy officers in Russia and his study entitled People’s Situation in the Ottoman Country (Sostoyanie naroda turetskogo).

2. P. A. Tolstoy’s Place in The Russian History

In the first years of 18th century, Petro I decided to solve disagreements with Turkey diplomatically due to the war continuing in the North (with Sweden). The Tsar gave that important mission to P. A. Tolstoy, who had experience in overseas missions; the Tsar thought that he could adapt himself to the “delicate political ideas” of the Ottomans. This diplomat is the first Russian diplomat to appoint as the permanent ambassador in the Ottoman Empire. Historian Pavlenko, who searched the diplomacy activities of ambassador, depicts him in his historical monograph entitled Vokrug Trona as follows:

While examining the content and framework of the meetings with Ottoman bureaucrats, Tolstoy leaves an impression that he was all-round person who was aggressive and prejudiced or civilized and calm when necessary and also fierce, strong-minded and relentless at the same time.4

In order to show Ambassador P. A. Tolstoy’s mission in Istanbul more clearly, we should briefly mention the developments in Russia in that period. That new period started when the Russian intellectuals gave an objective and reasonable quality to the Western culture and art that they brought to their country. Petro Reforms were inevitable in order to achieve practical and effective results in technology as in cultural life. In this period, the role of European embassy trips is quite important. The books, publications and notes that the travellers brought have broken a new ground in Russia.

Conflicts between the “new” and the “old”, the farfetched combination of the religious-symbolic approach that enlightenment trends exhibits against the universe and the searches of the national resurrection ongoing between the East and the West are the phenomena specific to the Petro Era. In the late 17th century and in the first quarter of the 18th century, the matters at hand in the Russia were the new life style, new housing and establishing a new capital. Following the European visits and trips of the Russian ambassadors, Petro’s Summer Palace was built on the banks of River Neva between 1710 and 1714, Graf Menshikov’s palace was built between 1710 and 1716 and St Petersburg’s famous Petropavlovsk Church, Twelve Koelegium buildings and Nevski Boulevard were built in the same dates.

Petro I’s reign during which P. A. Tolstoy lived, left a mark in the Russian history as a vibrant and colourful period. Historian N. P. Pavlov-Silvanski describes this period in his Ocherki po russkoy istorii XVIII-XIX vv. (Writings on Russian History 18th-19th centuries) as follows:

New clothes from Netherlands, a language degenerated with foreign words, chaos in the newly built city and works in the newly established dockyards... Petro standing in the middle of this scenery like a hero and associations of famous men around him, among them there are many people with a dark past as well as nobles and princes. Strong characters and rude attitudes which do not fit under the bright and elaborate uniforms of the Knyaz or Counts or

4 N. L. Pavlenko, Vokruk trona ptentsi gnezda Petrova strasti u trona, Moskva, Mysl, 1999, s.278-279.
behind their faces shaved in German style (...) Only Petro could rule these people with his strong and firm will by approaching them plainly and friendly.5

It is possible to see all dilemmas of the period in the life of P. A. Tolstoy (1645-1729) which was full of ups and downs; earnest progress and turnarounds in his political career, while he was participated in the rebellion of “streltsy” (soliders) against the Tsar, he became the most vigorous advocate of the new ruler only a few years later. Turkish historian A. N. Kurat describes this “streltsy uprising” as follows: “On 8.08.1689 (1682-E.I.), the troops in the Kremlin were ordered to get ready for operation (by Princess Sophia to dethrone Petro)... As the days pass, the number of supporters of Petro increased. Thereupon, Sophia wanted to come to Troitskiy Monastery to talk to Petro, however she turned back upon Petro’s request. With Petro’s order, Sophia was locked up in a monastery. Thus Petro got the upper hand and took command with his sick brother Ivan. However, the real ruler was Petro.”6

Tolstoy was born in 1645 as the son of a noble family which dates back to 14th century. He started his official duty in Ukraine with his father Andrey Vasilyevic Tolstoy. In 1671, P. A. Tolstoy started to work as a “stolnik” at the court of Tsarina Natalya Kirilovna (grandmother of Petro I). Stolnik, a word which was used in Russia until 17th century; an officer at the court, an interior rank to “boyar”7.

According to historians, this “young, dynamic and witty” commander was able to impress Petro I and was invited to Moscow in 1696 by the Tsar to participate in the second Azov campaign. It is known that the Russian Tsar was interested in the Turkish Navy and the new Naval Law enacted in 1701 as well as the Turkish Castles on Black Sea.8

Following the Azov Campaign, Petro I sent a committee of 37 people including Tolstoy to various cities in Europe both to represent Russian and have naval education in spring 1697. About P. A. Tolstoy’s European trip, researchers suggest various ideas. It has been thought for a long time that he willingly went abroad to show that he improved himself in line with the reformist Tsar’s innovations. The reason for this was that Tolstoy was 52 years old when he set off to Europe. However, there was no age difference between P. A. Tolstoy and his companions and there were a few people who were in their 40’s, as N. P Pavlov-Silvanski stated. Therefore, the Tsar chose the ambassadors from the officers commissioned at the court.9

The Ambassador states in his work Courtier P. A. Tolstoy’s European Trip Notes 1697-1699:

In 30 January 205, Petr Andreyevich Tolstoy was assigned with an official letter in his name by the Embassy Officers.10 Tsar Petro I introduced the new calendar. While the Russians were in 7208 AD, Europeans celebrated 1700.

Thus, Tolstoy departed from Moscow on 16 January 1697. They travelled by carts and the journey was long. When the traveller arrived in Smolensk town (Poland border, E.I.), he sent most of his assistants back and continued to Sileziya on horseback. He arrived in Wien two months later (22 May, E.I.). After having stayed for 6 days, he set off again and reached Venice which was determined as the final destination of the journey on 11 June. He had an education on mathematics and navigation. After having stayed on a ship in the Adriatic for about two months, P.A. Tolstoy landed in March 1698 and travelled to the Northern Italy on land. In June, the ambassador visited the Dalmatia and Ragusa Principality by sea and travelled to the south. Later, he went to Bari and got a navigation certificate from the captain of a ship and travelled to

5 N.P.Pavlov- Silvanski, Ocherki po istorii russkoy literaturny XVIII-XIX vv., S.Peterburg, Soç., 1910, s.6.
7 S.I. Ojegov, Slovar Russkogo yazika, Moskva, Russki yazik, 1989, s.685.
9 Pavlov-Silvanski, a.g.e., s. 12.
10 P.A.Tolstoy, Puteșestviye stonnika P.A.Tolstogo po Evrope (1697-1699), Moskva, Nauka, 1992, s.6.
11 N.N.Molçanov, Diplomatiya Petra pervogo, Moskva, Mejidunarodnye otношении, 1984, s.123.
Napoli by land. He went to the western shores of Italy on a ship and set off to Malta. On sea, Tolstoy witnessed Maltese mariners’ preparations for a battle with three Turkish ships and wrote it down in his diary: *We prepared the ship and weapons for the battle as required and waited until 12 o’clock; we saw the Turkish ships in about 10 verst distance, then the ships slowly passed us and set sail.*

A few days later, Tolstoy’s ship boarded in Malta and there the Russian Ambassador was welcomed by the Administrator of Maltese Community. He wandered around the island, and war ships, navy, the churches and places were shown to him. After taking the necessary information and documents from Malta, he went back to Napoli. From Napoli, he went to Rome on a road “perfectly paved with grey stones” which was used in the Ancient Times and the writer had to mention.

The traveller stayed in Rome, “the capital of Pope’s province” for about one week and visited the important historic sites of the “immortal city”. According to Russian and foreign researchers (See: L. Olşevskaya, S. Travnikov, F. Otten), Tolstoy’s European Trip Notes is among the best works which depict Rome in 17th century with its objective narrative. After having visited Florence and Bologna, he went back to Venice and stayed there for about two months. On 25 October 1698, the ambassador Tolstoy went back to his country with the written order of Ambassador F. A. Golovin who was the head of Moscow Embassy Office. Italy memories, which would have a significant place in the later years of his life, would include Tolstoy among the first “westerners” in Petro’s Russia.

3. P. A. Tolstoy’s Stay in The Ottoman Empire and Istanbul

As mentioned before, the time that Tolstoy, who was an experienced diplomat, spent in Turkey coincides with a very important period for Russia. When the Russian Army was defeated by the Swedes in Narva War in 1700, Petro I lost his allies in the west. To prevent that the Ottoman Empire had an attitude against Russia, the Tsar decided to strengthen his relations with the Ottoman. To fulfil this mission, he chose Graf (Count) P. A. Tolstoy among the “westerner” officers as ambassador. As Pavlenko stated, this mission in the neighbour country revealed the existing imagination and physical strength of the ambassador as well as his diplomatic skills and wit.\textsuperscript{13} Tolstoy, who was 57 years old when he was appointed as the Russian Ambassador in Ottoman Empire, was already equipped with sufficient military, diplomatic and administrative experience.

While Russia used to know Turkish soil and Istanbul from the irregular records of the travellers, merchants, pilgrims, diplomats, soldiers and prisoners, Russian state started show a deeper interest in its powerful neighbour in the south starting with Petro I.\textsuperscript{14} Before Tolstoy was appointed as ambassador with full authority, diplomatic relations between the two countries were limited to mutual visits of embassy committees. Pavlenko tells that Tolstoy was appointed as ambassador to Istanbul with full authority on 2 April 1702 and he stepped on the Ottoman soil only 12 days later. In the letter of goodwill given to him to be submitted to the Sultan and Grand Vizier, these words of Petro I stand out: “...May the friendship and love between you and us, the consistent peace between our states be constant...”.\textsuperscript{15} In this letter which contains the peaceful intentions of Russia are also instructions regarding to the route to be followed and visits to be made to the Sultan, Grand Vizier and other Turkish authorities. Russian ambassador arrived in Edirne where Sultan Mustafa II’s (1695-1703) was located on 29 August 1702. During his first days there, the ambassador started to gather information about the country, court and people who are influential in the domestic and foreign policy of the country, Turkish

\textsuperscript{12} Tolstoy, a.g.e., s.155.
\textsuperscript{13} Pavlenko, a.g.e., s.42.
\textsuperscript{14} A.D.Jeltyakov,” İzuçeniye kulturny Turtsii v Rossii i SSSR”, Turkologičeski sbornik, 1978, Moskva, GRVL; Vostoçnaya literatura, 1984, s.88.
\textsuperscript{15} Pavlenko, a.g.e., s.280.
people and Orthodox people living here without losing time. As well as Fedorov’s historical novel *Poruçat Rossiya* (Russia is Calling for Duty), the Pavlenko’s historical monograph *Vokrug Tiona* (Around the Throne), frequently mentions people who helped Tolstoy in this matter. Patrick of Jerusalem Dosifey who was commissioned in Ottoman Empire and his cousin Spiliot were the people who provided information to the Russian Ambassador in any matter. After having settled in the mansion allocated for the Russian embassy in Edirne, Tolstoy’s assistant reverend Timofey finds Serbian merchant Savva Lukich Vladislavovich who was recommended to them in Moscow. The embassy decree contains recommendations that “this person was reliable, knowledgeable and ready to help the Russian”.16

Although his official visit to the Sultan and Grand Vizier was delayed by Ottoman administrators, the Russian Ambassador continued to work on the subjects and questions in the hidden guide which contained 16 items. The Embassy officers in Russia were expecting information from him regarding the situation of the country and whether the Ottoman has any plans on attacking Russia. Moscow requested him to shed a light on matters such as the Sultan’s and his “inner circle’s” approach towards war, whether the government has a say and the financial situation of the treasury. However, given the conditions of the period, it is possible to understand the Russian government’s interest in the armed forces of the Ottoman Empire. Senior Embassy Officers requested Tolstoy to obtain information whether the cavalry, infantry and artillery troops of the Turkish Land Forces were “trained in European style”. The ambassador sent regular reports about the Ottoman Fleet and especially the Castles on Black Sea shores. The great majority of the subjects and questions included in the instruction were related to the political and economic relations of the Ottoman Empire with other countries.

On 10 November 1702, the Russian Ambassador visited “Daltaban Mustafa Paşa who was in his fifties and appointed upon the recommendation of the Mufti” at the court. Despite the Ottoman administrators’ insistence to send Tolstoy back to his country, cunning ambassador was able to stay in Turkey by bringing forward the Crimea question. Following the uprising called “Edirne Incident”, Sultan Ahmet III (1703-1730), the brother of Sultan Mustafa II, who was enthroned after the nobles’ march to Edirne, moved the court to Istanbul. Tolstoy and ambassadors of other countries in Edirne were sent to Istanbul. A few months before this incident, these words were written in the report sent to Moscow: “The end of Shaikh al-Islam and his sons will be possible with the joint uprising of the people and military troops” (Tsentralnyy gosudarstvennyy arhiv drevnih aktov, dosya 2 (1703), h. 396).

In 1703 which was full of tremor for the Ottoman Empire, Tolstoy also sent his study entitled *Sostoyanie naroda turetskogo (People’s Situation in Ottoman Empire)* which was based on investigations of a cautious observer to Moscow in addition to his regular reports. As suggested by Pavlenko, this comprehensive study was like a comprehensive encyclopaedia which depicts the history, social order and domestic and foreign affairs of the Ottoman Empire.17 After having lost the war against the Holy League (1684-1699), Ottoman Empire was trying to lay the foundation of a new foreign policy at that time. The fact that Tolstoy included all these developments in his “People’s Situation in Ottoman Empire” enabled the Russians to have information about their neighbour in the south.18

A policy determined in accordance with this information contributed in solving the problems between these neighbour countries. Upon Grand Vizier’s promise to the Russian Ambassador in 1704 that “his any need will be fulfilled abundantly since the court sees him as a friend”, “a building with a wide garden and a fountain in it” was allocated to the Embassy.19 Moreover, as Petr Andreevich stated in both his diaries and *Sostoyanie naroda turetskogo (People’s Situation in Ottoman Empire)*, Grand Vizier Hasan Pasha gave special attention to him, sent fruit baskets and flowers to his house when he was sick. However, when Grand Vizier Ahmet Pasha was appointed in place of Grand Vizier

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16 Y.Fedorov, Poruçat Rossiya, Moskva, Izdatelstvo Trast, 1992, s.33.
17 Pavlenko, a.g.e., s.289.
18 M.L.Semevsky, Slovo i delo 1700-1725, Oçerki i rasskazy iz Russkoy istorii XVIII veka, S.Peterburg, 1884, s.104.
19 Pavlenko, a.g.e., s.291.
Hasan Pasha in 1704, the Russian Ambassador faced a different attention. He was under supervision of the Janissaries once again as he was in Edirne. The reason of this “close surveillance” as the Ambassador noted was revealed in spring of 1705. According to the rumour that reached Istanbul, it was understood that the Ottoman Ambassador in Moscow Mustafa Ağa was “not free and he was arrested”. However, later it was revealed that this claim was not true. Although Tolstoy wandered the beaches and marketplaces of this beautiful city, the dockyards and coffeehouses in Haliç and admired vivid colours, “spring sun”, “almond trees”, “gardens full of scent of bay leaves”, he missed his country. It is possible to see this longing in his words to the head of Embassy officers “my stay here became harder”.

As of 1705, incidents took a different path in the Russian Embassy in Istanbul. Reverend Timofey was murdered in April. While it was stated that Tolstoy was forced to poison Timofey who betrayed “Russian State” and his “religious fellows”. in Y. Fedorov’s Novel *Poručaet Rossiya (Russia is Calling for Duty)*, Pavlenko preferred to look for the cause of this death in the plots of the French ambassador.

4. Conclusion

As we stated above, vibrant developments occurred in Istanbul at the beginning of 18th century. Embassy activities of the Russian Ambassador and other countries indicate that Istanbul was in a significant position in that period for both Russia and other European Countries. The ambassador chosen by the Tsar, P.A. Tolstoy carried out his mission in Turkey successfully between 1702 and 1714. These 12 years which was full of dense relations and difficulties became a centre of interest for both Russian historians and writers. Tolstoy’s long stay in Istanbul for 12 years indicates that Russia, which came out of a long war, was in favour of peace with the Ottoman Empire. However, with the provocation of the British, French and Austrian diplomats, Ottoman Empire declared war against Russia.

When the war broke out between Turkey and Russia, Tolstoy was imprisoned in Yedikule Dungeon at the end of 1710. The Ambassador’s reports to Moscow were interrupted in 1709. As Pavlenko suggested, he might have destroyed the reports of 1710 before being imprisoned and he might have not written during 1711-1713 since he was in prison. Russian Ambassador returned to his country in 1714. As it can be understood from the resources we have researched, when he was sent to the Ottoman Empire as Ambassador, Tolstoy tried to explain the situation in Istanbul by showing examples of both positive and negative developments to the instructions and questions included in the guide prepared by Petro I. The efforts and endeavour of the Ambassador during his 12-year stay in Istanbul led to positive results in establishing peace and improving trade in early 18th century not only between Turkey and Russia but also for many other European countries.
Figure 1. M. I. Semevsky, *Slovo I delo*, 1700–1725. (secret mission of P.A. Tolstoy)

Figure 2. M. I. Semevsky, *Slovo I delo*, 1700-1725. [Word and Mission.] Sample of work
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F. Otten, Osteuropa-Institut München, Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas, Neve Folge Band, 37, 1989.


tsentralniy gosudarstvenniy arhiv drevnih aktov, [Central state archive of ancient acts] dosya 2 (1703), h. 396 .