

ИСТОРИЯ ВОСТОКА

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**TRADE RELATIONS OF RUSSIA AND AUSTRIA-HUNGARY WITH
THE LEVANTINE PROVINCES OF THE OTTOMAN EM-PIRE IN THE LATE
XIX - EARLY XX CENTURIES**

В представленной статье рассматривается развитие торговых отношений России и Австро-Венгрии в конце XIX – начале XX вв. на территории Сирии, Ливана и Палестины, входивших в состав Османской империи. На основе компаративного анализа автор приходит к выводу, что Австро-Венгрия смогла добиться больших успехов в развитии внешней торговли с данным регионом, нежели Россия. Предприниматели из империи Габсбургов тщательно изучали запросы потребителей на территории Османской империи и специфику организации торговли на Ближнем Востоке. Российские предприниматели в основном ориентировались на емкий внутренний рынок, уделяя развитию экспорта второстепенное значение. Россия и Австро-Венгрия столкнулись с рядом существенных проблем при организации внешнеэкономической деятельности на территории Сирии, Ливана и Палестины. Кроме конкуренции других европейских государств и США, им пришлось столкнуться с низким уровнем доходов местного населения, что существенно ограничивало его покупательную способность и возможность приобретать высококачественные импортные товары.

Ключевые слова: Австро-Венгрия, Сирия, Ливан, Палестина, внешняя торговля, экономические связи, экспорт, импорт

This article deals with the development of trade relations between Russia and Austria-Hungary in the late XIX - early XX centuries on the territory of Syria, Lebanon and Palestine, which were part of the Ottoman Empire. On the basis of a comparative analysis, the author concludes that Austria-Hungary was able to achieve great success in the development of foreign trade with this region in comparison with Russia. Entrepreneurs from the Habsburg Empire thoroughly studied consumer demands on the territory of the Ottoman Empire and the specific features of trade organization in the Middle East. Russian businessmen were mainly focused on the large domestic market and paid secondary attention to the development of exports. Russia and Austria-Hungary faced the number of significant problems in the organization of foreign economic activity on the territory of Syria, Lebanon and Palestine. Besides the competition of other European countries and the United States, they had to face low incomes of the local population, which significantly limited its purchasing power and the ability to acquire high-quality imported goods.

Keywords: Austria-Hungary, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, foreign trade, economic relations, exports, imports.

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In the last quarter of the XIX century economic relations of the Ottoman Empire with European countries became more dynamic. Leading banks of Europe appeared as the main creditors for Porte, as a result it was losing its financial independence [1,p.146]. Even the tax system of the Empire was under the control of foreigners to a considerable extent [14,p.36-38]. Foreign investors put resources in the economy of the country, mostly in the

railway construction, banking and insurance [6,p.122]. Foreign trade became the main factor in the development of economic relations between the Ottoman Empire and Europe.

By the early XX century Austria-Hungary and Russia achieved considerable results in this sphere. General trade turnover of Austria-Hungary with the Ottoman Empire increased from 41,3 m roubles in 1901 (export 26,5 m, import 14,8 m) to 88,6 m roubles in 1912 (export 68,9 m, import 19,7 m). The trade turnover of Russia with the Ottoman Empire increased from 30 m roubles (export 21,9 m, import 8,1 m) to 46,2 m roubles in 1912 (30,0 m, import 16,2 m) [9, p.96-97, 7, p.452; 8, p.III,IV].

Ports of Istanbul, Thesaloniki, Smyrna occupied dominating positions in the trade with foreign countries. They headed for serving economic interests of West Anatolia, the European part and the capital of the country, where a considerable part of population lived. In particular, about a third of the whole foreign trade turnover of the Ottoman Empire fell on Istanbul. Lebanon, Palestine and Syria did not belong to the periphery of the Empire either. Syria was one of the granaries of Turkey, Palestine and Lebanon had traditional close economic relations with European countries. Every year Palestine was visited by numerous pilgrims from different countries. This factor also influenced the region's economy. By the early XX century, with the general number of population in the Ottoman Empire being 32,2 m people, 623,5 thousand people lived on the territory of Beirut vilayet, 100 thousand people in Lebanon one, 264,3 thousand people in Jerusalem one, 701,1 thousand people in Syria one, 921,3 thousand people in Haleb one, altogether more than 2,6 m people. [11,p.389].

Austria-Hungary and Russia did not put forward the task of securing their own political influence in the region including the expansion of economic relations with it. They pursued utilitarian aims connected with getting new markets for their products and buying necessary goods in Syria, Lebanon and Palestine. Vienna and Saint-Petersburg were only keeping an eye on pilgrims' rights and the status of the holy places in Palestine. France had more claims on this region, as it was dreaming of creating under its protectorate "United Syria", that would include Syria, Lebanon and possibly Palestine [15, p.27-28].

Most part of foreign trade turnover of the Ottoman Empire Levantine vilayets, including that with Russia and Austria-Hungary, went through the ports of Jaffa, Beirut and Tripoli. By the early XX century Russian and Austrian-Hungarian manufacturers more and more often turned out to be rivals trying to squeeze each other's positions in the delivery of various goods, as the local market was becoming full of European goods.

Considerable achievements of Russia and Austria-Hungary in the development of trade with the ports of Lebanon and Palestine were in great degree explained by arranging regular communication with them. Russian ships made voyages from Odessa and Batoum. Representation of the "Russian society of steam-navigation and trade" was opened in Beirut. Just in 1913 vessels of the "Russian society of steam-navigation and trade" transported through Jaffa loads for more than 4 m roubles. [5, p.39]. Russia took the 2d place in the number of vessels coming to the ports Jaffa and Tripoli, and the 3d place in the general tonnage. In particular, 119 vessels from Austria-Hungary (229 thousand tons displacement), 116 vessels from Great Britain (213 thousand tons displacement), 120 vessels from Russia (197 thousand tons displacement) came to Tripoli in 1913. [4, p.43].

Austria-Hungary and Russia kept under their control a considerable part of sea transport to the ports of Lebanon and Palestine. "Austrian Lloyd" made voyages from Trieste, and the Hungarian "Adria" from Fiume. Shipping companies of Austria-Hungary and Russia delivered cargoes not only from their countries, other countries also used their service.

Port Jaffa was the sea gate of Palestine in the XIX-early XX century. In 1898 Austria-Hungary delivered to this port goods for 1m 493 thousand francs, Great Britain – for 1m 498 thousand francs, France – for 1m 421 thousand francs and Russia – for 1m 147 thousand francs [11, p.401]. In Palestine there was a considerable demand for building timber and the products of woodworking industry. Austria-Hungary traditionally dominated in timber export to Palestine,

yearly delivering timber for 290 thousand francs. From the late XIX century Russian manufacturers started to make efforts to increase their own delivery of timber to Palestine, mostly from the port of Odessa. As a result, by the early XX century they brought their products for 180 thousand francs. Delivery of tinned goods and pickling to Jaffa was very successful for Austria-Hungary (30 thousand francs) and Russia (35 thousand francs), though they were a little behind Great Britain and France in this respect. [11, p.401].

European fabrics were very popular in the region in the last quarter of the XIX century. Austria-Hungary dominated in delivering cloth and linen to Jaffa (215 thousand francs), Great Britain got 40 thousand francs, and Russia only 25 thousand francs. It should be noted that products made of linen and cloth, produced in the Habsburg Empire, were in great demand on the markets of the whole Near East. They were notable for their high quality and acceptable price. The same situation existed in the delivery of woolen cloth, where Austria-Hungary took the first place (40 thousand francs), being ahead of Great Britain (12 thousand francs), France (10 thousand francs) and Russia (5 thousand francs). In trading cotton fabrics Russia and Austria-Hungary gave the market of Palestine, Syria and Lebanon completely to French and Britain manufacturers. Delivery from the Habsburg Empire was completely absent, Russia delivered products for only 12 thousand francs.

One of the main export goods delivered to the Ottoman Empire from Europe was sugar. Austria-Hungary and Russia occupied leading positions in this sphere. Sugar composed about the third part of all the export of Austria-Hungary to the Ottoman Empire. Austria-Hungary had the first place in this respect. That is why sugar from Austria-Hungary predominated in Syria, Lebanon and Palestine. On the boundary of the XIX-XX centuries sugar for 750-800 thousands francs was shipped to Jaffa yearly, from this amount about 600 thousand francs fell on Austria-Hungary and 60 thousand francs on Russia. [11, p.401].

At the same time in the late XIX century Russia acquired the first position in exporting flour to the region. The Ottoman Empire constantly needed the import of flour, as its agriculture could not meet the growing demand for this kind of products. For a long time Russia did not manage to press the positions of Austria-Hungary, Romania, India, which dominated the flour market of the Ottoman Empire. In the late XIX – early XX centuries Russia had already kept under its control almost half of flour exports to Jaffa, delivering it for 230 thousand francs, and completely forced the rivals of Austria-Hungary out of Palestine and Lebanon. The situation of grain production in the Habsburg Empire existed in the following way: the Austrian part of the Empire imported grain from the Hungarian part. Hungary was the granary of the Danube Empire. It delivered cereals to Germany in large quantities. Because of this Austria-Hungary did not pay much attention to arranging the delivery of big consignments of flour to Levant in the early XX century. Besides, by the early XX century Russia had monopolized export of paint and wall-paper to Palestine delivering these goods for 320 thousand francs. [11, p.401].

Despite the predominance of Moslems in the region, spirits and wine were delivered to Jaffa from Europe in big quantities. Austria-Hungary and France managed to put this export under control. The Habsburg Empire delivered production for 200 thousand francs and France for 130 thousand francs. In the late XIX century Russia was able to beat Great Britain (35 thousand francs) in its export of alcoholic drinks to Jaffa and took the third place (40 thousand francs).

Beirut occupied an important place in the export of goods to Lebanon and Syria. But the position of Russia in trading with these regions on the boundary of the XIX-XX centuries did not look so successful as in Palestine. Russia delivered kerosene and flour to Beirut in small quantities. By the early XX century delivery of kerosene to Lebanon and Syria was kept under control by the USA manufacturers. Local population used kerosene not only in their family life but also in the engines pumping water in irrigation systems. That is why the demand for kerosene was constantly increasing in Levantine vilayets.

Flour was delivered to Beirut mostly from Austria-Hungary and Romania. By the early XX century delivery of timber to Beirut achieved a large scale, almost 5 m francs, but it was fully controlled by Austria-Hungary and Romania. One more promising item of export was delivery of leather and straps (640 thousand francs), which was controlled by Austria-Hungary and other European countries. The failure of Russian trade in Beirut was partly explained by the direct delivery of goods from Russia to Syria through Aleppo on average for 365 thousand francs, including kerosene for 275 thousand francs and sugar for 90 thousand francs [11, p.401].

The question arose of the reasons for Russia being behind Austria-Hungary in trading with Levantine provinces of the Ottoman Empire as well as with the majority of its other regions on the boundary of the XIX-XX centuries. Austria-Hungary showed great interest in the development of trade with the Ottoman Empire. Ministry of foreign affairs of Austria-Hungary, chambers of commerce and industry constantly paid attention to the necessity to stir up economic relations with the Ottoman Empire. In 1870 Austrian-Hungarian Chamber of commerce started its activity in Istanbul, it was one of the first establishments of this kind in the Ottoman Empire, opened by European countries. [9, p.116]. The Chamber, the diplomatic missions of Austria-Hungary, the business structures paid great attention to studying specific features of the Ottoman Empire consumer's markets. They carefully collected information of the local population demands for various goods exported from Europe, of organizing trade in the country, of the Ottoman Empire inhabitants' ideas of entrepreneurs' culture. In particular, manufacturers from Austria-Hungary paid attention to the local dwellers' demands to the width and colour of fabrics, taste qualities of sugar and its parcelling, etc.

There were representatives of the leading trade firms from Austria-Hungary or their persons authorized in all big cities of the Ottoman Empire. They were conducting active marketing policy introducing local people to the goods from the Habsburg Empire. The same mission was carried out by a numerous army of commercial travelers from Austria-Hungary, who were constantly wandering from one vilayet to another of the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, just in time, attention in Austria-Hungary was attracted to peculiarities of conducting commercial operations in the Ottoman Empire. The majority of goods were delivered on credit. The existence of Austria-Hungary banks representatives in the Ottoman Empire facilitated financial operations between the Habsburg Empire and the Ottoman Empire. The entrepreneurs of Austria-Hungary paid considerable attention to the timely fulfilment of orders made by their Ottoman partners.

Russia was defeated by Austria-Hungary practically in all spheres. Russian manufacturers mostly catered for the vast interior market of Russia. Because of this their foreign economic activity in most cases was of irregular, minor character. Only in bad harvest years, when purchasing power of the Russian population decreased, they started to think of foreign markets. Russian manufacturers were not well aware of the situation on the Ottoman Empire markets and of the consumer preferences of its inhabitants. Russian firms did not practically possessed their own representatives, agents and commercial travelers [9, p.120-121]. That is why Russia could not fully use the complicated geo-political position of the Ottoman Empire in its own interests. Annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Italian-Turkish war did not cause a considerable increase of Russian goods export due to the boycott of Austrian-Hungarian and then Italian products in the Ottoman Empire [12, p.56-57].

However the years 1909-1910 turned out to be notable for the Russian foreign trade in Lebanon, Palestine and Syria. In these years the "Russian-Eastern commercial association" was founded in Beirut on the initiative of the local Lebanon merchants with the support of Russian diplomats for expanding economic relations between Lebanon and Russia [2, p.23]. At the beginning of 1910 the traveling exhibition of Russian goods organized on the steamer "Nickolai II" visited Tripoli, Beirut and Jaffa. The exhibition was a big success with the local population, it introduced the people to the samples of the best Russian goods.

A great event in the foreign trade of Russia in the Ottoman Empire was opening of the bank service market of the Ottoman Empire for Saint Petersburg, in spite of the resistance of Great Britain and France. In 1909 a branch of the “Russian bank of foreign trade” started to work in Istanbul. The branch immediately got a considerable number of clients, and since 1911 it was giving profit to the head bank [10, p.128].

Bombardment of the port Beirut in February 1912 and the sea blockade of Smyrna brought the growth of goods delivery from Russia and Austria-Hungary through Tripoli. A portion of them went as transit goods to Anatolia and Syria. The success of Tripoli was also explained by building the railway to the port in 1911. The flourishing of Tripoli began since 1911. Gradually it started to press positions of Beirut and Alexandretta. Cargoes intended for building the Baghdad railway were also delivered through the port.

The main part of the Russian export to Tripoli went through Odessa. In 1911 2,9 thousand poods of flour, 1,8 thousand poods of spirits and 90 carriages of timber were delivered to the port. Russia increased export of the Baku kerosene to Tripoli through Batoum. In 1911 40 thousand boxes of kerosene (72 lbs. in each of them) were delivered to Tripoli, and in 1912 there were 120 thousand boxes. About half of the Russian kerosene from Tripoli went further to Hama, Hama and Aleppo. More than 60% of kerosene market in the economic capital of Syria Aleppo was possessed by Russia. Thus, Russia kept control over more than 50% of kerosene export to Tripoli, its rivals Romania (86 thousand boxes) and the USA (20 thousand boxes) were considerably behind [13, p.29]. Therefore, in the early XX century American manufacturers were gradually giving up their positions in the region to Russia and Romania, though they dominated in the region in the last quarter of the XIX century. By the early XX century Romania became one of the largest manufacturers of oil and oil products. Bucharest paid the paramount attention to its oil and oil products export, as the interior market could use only a small part of the production.

In the early XX century Austria-Hungary was one of the five leaders of oil mining in the world. Oil from Galisia mostly went to the interior market of the Empire or was exported to Germany and to the countries of the Balkan peninsula. Manufacturers of kerosene in Austria-Hungary did not put forward ambitious plans of increasing the export of their products to the Near East.

But Russia yielded to Austria-Hungary in the volume of trade with Tripoli. It occupied the 8 place in the import of goods, while Austria-Hungary was the second, and in exports Russia (the 6 place) managed to beat Austria-Hungary (the 7 place). In 1913 Russia mostly exported lemons and oranges from Tripoli to Odessa (238 thousand poods) [4, p.44].

The success of Russian export to Tripoli in 1913 turned out to be more impressive. Russia delivered 252 thousands boxes of kerosene, 21,5 thousand poods of flour, 2,1 thousand poods of spirits, etc. [4, p.44]. The growth of the Russian kerosene export especially attracts attention. Its delivery was kept under control by the firms of Arvanitidi, Rylskiy, Bnitto, Nobel brothers, “Mars” of Khachatouryants. Altogether 410 thousand boxes of kerosene were delivered to Tripoli in 1913; besides Russia, as in the previous years, the delivery was realized by Romania (95 thousand boxes) and the USA (45 thousand boxes) from the plants of “Standard Oil”. About 20% of the production was left in Tripoli, the rest part was sent to Syria. The Romanian oil was cheaper than that from Russia (5 francs against 5,5 francs). But the production from Russia was of good quality and had good packing. Reducing its price could cause practically full ousting of the production of Romania and the USA from the region. The success of the Russian producers was assisted by opening the commercial representation of Nobel brothers company in Jaffa and by appearing in Jaffa representatives of business houses of the Arvanitidi firm and the firm “Anchor”. The business house “Amin Shebar Azzouni” presented interests of the Arvanitidi firm and the business house “Zoukhdi Abul Giben” those of the firm “Mark”.

In spite of the success of Tripoli, Beirut remained the main Lebanon port, through which the Russian goods were delivered. Military operations left an imprint on the volumes of goods

traffic in Beirut port. In 1911 20 thousand poods of flour were delivered to Beirut from Russia, and in 1912 17 thousand poods, 60 thousand poods of spirits and 38 thousand poods correspondingly, 130 carriages of timber and 80 carriages correspondingly [13, p.29]. In 1913 the Russian export through Beirut increased again.

Jaffa remained one of the biggest ports of the Eastern Mediterranean coast on the eve of the World War I. In 1913 goods for 12,3m roubles were brought to the port compared to 10,2 m roubles in 1912. The main part of these goods consisted of cotton fabrics (2,2 m roubles), flour (1,4 m roubles), timber (1 m roubles) and kerosene (260 thousand boxes for 759 thousand roubles) [5, p.25]. More than 65% of the kerosene delivery was kept under the control of Russia, 25% was under the control of Romania and the USA. The largest part of Jaffa trade turnover was made by Great Britain (4,1 m roubles), which pressed Austria-Hungary (1,6 m roubles) from the first place, Russia (1,5 m roubles) pressing France to the fourth place. All of them had fair balance in trading with Jaffa: Great Britain (+0,25 m roubles), Austria-Hungary (+1,3 m roubles), Russia (+0,75 m roubles). Russia mostly delivered oranges from Jaffa for 370 thousand roubles [5,p.37].

In contradistinction to Russia, export of Austria-Hungary to Jaffa looked more diverse. It delivered timber, sugar, fabrics, nails, roof iron, some other metal-made things, agricultural implements, consumer goods, etc.

In the opinion of Russian diplomats, the success of Russian exporters in Syria, Lebanon and Palestine could have been more essential. In the region there was a demand for Russian sugar, matches, cement, leather, iron, agricultural machines, timber, planks and other goods, in spite of the sharp competition with other countries.

During the last pre-war years exporters of spirit from Russia and Austria-Hungary, who had for a long time kept under control a considerable part of its delivery to Lebanon, Syria and Palestine, faced the competition of manufacturers from Dutch India. Austria-Hungary even stopped exporting spirit to the region for some time and continued it only in 1913. Indian manufacturers delivered their production in metal barrels, taking back empty packing from local merchants, which immediately made their production cheaper. This way of trade organization was soon acquired by the suppliers from Austria-Hungary, who came back to Levantine market. Russian manufacturers worked in the old way, bearing considerable financial losses as a result of the rivals' actions.

In the early XX century the demand for timber and the production of woodworking industry was growing in Lebanon, Syria, Palestine. The biggest part of the local market was divided between Austria-Hungary and Romania, their manufacturers entered the cartel agreement, which prevented the expansion of the Russian export in the region. And the timber prices established by the cartel for Tripoli turned out to be lower than those for Beirut and Jaffa. Incidentally, the production of woodworking industry of Bukovina was delivered as transit goods to Tripoli and other ports of the Ottoman Empire through Odessa. Russian production formed only 20% on the Russian steamships delivering timber to Jaffa, the rest cargo belonged to Austria-Hungary.

In the late XIX century some successful bargains of the Russian manufacturers were of the local character. But in the case of the smallest manifestation of initiative Russian entrepreneurs reached a certain success. When one of the firms assisted by the "Russian society of steamship and commerce" started to deliver timber to Jaffa, it managed to increase the delivery from 1910 till 1913 almost in 3,5 times. The general consul of Russia in Beirut G.D. Batyushkov pointed to the main cause of Russia being behind Austria-Hungary and Romania in the timber export. Russian manufacturers were little interested in increasing timber delivery to the region, the quality of their production did not suit the local inhabitants. Sawing out beams in Russia was made carelessly, with the use of primitive methods, so the local people preferred buying the production from Austria-Hungary and Romania, it was of high quality and also cheap [3, p. 92].

On the eve of the World War I Austria-Hungary put under its control practically all export of sugar to Syria, Lebanon and Palestine, pressing the positions of manufacturers from Russia, Great Britain and France. Production from Austria-Hungary was distinguished by the good quality, relatively low price and convenient packing, in distinction to the Russian production. Russian manufacturers did not show initiative in increasing the export of their production to the region. In 1913 the sugar-refinery of brothers Bobrinskiy delivered a small consignment of sugar (435 bags) to Jaffa. Considering the fact that altogether 36630 bags were delivered to the port in that year, the contribution of Russia looked unconvincing.

In the early XX century Austria-Hungary and Russia could not considerably increase the delivery of flour to the region in the same way as other countries. Local people, who had low incomes, preferred flour from Syria and Anatolia, it was of low quality but it was cheaper. Imported flour was used in the region as an addition to the local flour in order to improve its quality and for the bakeries which supplied Europeans and the local elite with bread. Besides, Russian manufacturers did not observe requirements of the local market for parceling and packing of the goods. Absence of the direct connection of Lebanon and Palestine ports with Mariupol, Rostov-on-the Don, Novorossiysk and Kherson, that were used for the main flow of the flour export from Russia, hampered increasing export from Russia. Yet Russia kept its control over more than half of delivery of the imported flour to Tripoli and Beirut, from 1912 to 1913 it doubled its export to Jaffa from 8,3 thousand bags to 17,1 thousand bags and was ahead of its rivals from Austria-Hungary [5, p. 30].

In the late XIX century the market of fabrics and ready-made clothes was considered very promising in Lebanon, Syria and Palestine. In the early XX century the situation somewhat changed. Fabrics made in the Ottoman Empire and Egypt managed to press the positions of European manufacturers. In 1911 there was the peak of delivering fabrics to Jaffa (2,4 m roubles), then it started to become lower. Europeans and the local elite were the main consumers of the imported fabrics in the region. Peasants (fellahs and bedouins) had no money to buy them. That is why, compared to the late XIX century, Russia and Austria-Hungary did not manage to reach a considerable success in this direction. Small consignments of fabrics from Lodz were delivered to Jaffa. Austria-Hungary headed for increasing delivery of ready-made clothes to the region.

Thus, Austria-Hungary and Russia remained the main commercial partners of Syria, Lebanon and Palestine in the late XIX – early XX centuries, despite strengthening economic positions of Great Britain in the region. Austria-Hungary put under its control the delivery of sugar and timber, and Russia kept control over the delivery of kerosene and flour to Levantine vilayets of the Ottoman Empire. The success of Austria-Hungary was assisted by the careful study of the consumer market in Syria, Palestine and Lebanon, of peculiarities of trade organization in the region, active marketing policy, precise observance of commercial agreements with local traders.

Russian entrepreneurs, except kerosene manufacturers, mostly directed their attention to the interior market, paying secondary attention to the development of export. They poorly knew consuming demands of the population in the Near East, specific features of organizing commercial operations in the Ottoman Empire. Some objective factors also hampered Russian trade in Syria, Palestine and Lebanon, they included expensive freight, absence of Russian banks representatives in the Ottoman Empire up to 1909, inefficient activity of the official and entrepreneurs' structures responsible for the development of economic relations between Russia and the Ottoman Empire. From 1909-1910 this situation started to change gradually in the positive direction. The successful experience of Austria-Hungary in adjusting business contacts with the outlying districts of the Ottoman Empire began to be used in Russia.

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