



Universiteit  
Leiden  
The Netherlands

**The constitutional revolution of 1908 and its aftermath in Trabzon**  
Ahmetoglu, S.

**Citation**

Ahmetoglu, S. (2019, February 12). *The constitutional revolution of 1908 and its aftermath in Trabzon*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/68645>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/68645>

**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Cover Page



Universiteit Leiden



The handle <http://hdl.handle.net/1887/68645> holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation.

**Author:** Ahmetoglu, S.

**Title:** The constitutional revolution of 1908 and its aftermath in Trabzon

**Issue Date:** 2019-02-12

## Chapter II

# ECONOMIC LIFE IN TRABZON

### (1908-1914)

#### **2.1. The Economy before the Proclamation of the Second Constitution in Trabzon**

Throughout history Trabzon has remained an important port city for all of the empires and states that have risen and fallen in Anatolia, all of which strove to keep it within their grasp. As a result of the Industrial Revolution and developments in shipping technologies, Trabzon became an important trade hub between Europe, Iran, Caucasia, and Central Asia, which increased the economic as well as the strategic significance of Trabzon.

Until 1774, the Black Sea was under the complete control of the Ottomans, which made Trabzon critical as a port city, but when Russia acquired commercial privileges in the Black Sea with the signing of the Küçük Kaynarca Treaty in 1774, Ottoman economic clout declined in the region, as did the economy of Trabzon. When the Black Sea was opened up to international commerce, Ottoman-Iran trade routes were affected as well because Armenian merchants started trading directly between Trabzon and Tebriz. Russia was concerned about that shift in routes so it started to take a closer interest in the Armenian population, especially merchants in Trabzon and Tebriz.<sup>1</sup>

The most important factor that increased trade in Trabzon was the British desire to find a shortcut for its exports to eastern markets. Previously, Black Sea trade between Europe and Iran was mostly along the Odesa-Suhumkale-Tiflis and Erivan route—in other words, through Russian territory. In 1832 when Russia abolished tax exemptions, the Trabzon-Erzurum-Tebriz route became a

---

1 Hikmet Öksüz-Veyssel Usta-Kenan İnan, *Trabzon Ticaret ve Sanayi Odası Tarihi 1884-1950*, Trabzon: Trabzon Ticaret ve Sanayi Odası Yayınları, 2009, p. 35.

better option for European merchants. The Crimean War, which lasted from 1850 to 1853, and developments in steamship transportation contributed to the increase of commerce in Trabzon.<sup>2</sup> However, with the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, Europeans started shifting their shipments south instead of taking the Trabzon route. Because the Russians wanted to draw the European-Iran route back into their own territories, a railway was built between Poti and Tbilisi in 1872, which again diminished Trabzon's importance as a hub of trade.<sup>3</sup>

Starting in the second half of the nineteenth century, the majority of Ottoman Christians, who by that time were under the protection of European Powers, played an important role in the Ottoman economy. That played out in Trabzon as well. In 1884, of fourteen large commission agencies in Trabzon, three were run by Iranians, one by a Swiss man, and the rest by Greeks and Armenians. Out of thirty-three exporters, three were Muslim, one was Swiss, and the remainder were again non-Muslim Ottoman merchants, who also dominated the import and insurance sectors. As trade was under European sway and controlled by non-Muslims in Trabzon, the development of economic and financial services also broadened the socio-economic gap between Muslims and non-Muslims.<sup>4</sup>

In the 1820s, many embassies, foreign shipment and insurance agencies, and banks opened in Trabzon as the city grew as a commercial hub. In 1891, Osmanlı Bank opened a branch in the city, followed by Ziraat Bank a few years later. The Trabzon chamber of commerce, which was established in 1884, worked hard to develop the economy of the city.<sup>5</sup> A railway construction project as well as an improved road were proposed at the end of the nineteenth century in order to expand the Trabzon-Iran trade route, but those projects were never realized.

## **2.2. The Railway Problem of Trabzon**

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Trabzon had many problems with transportation and infrastructure despite its importance as a commercial hub in the Black Sea region. A paved road running from Trabzon Erzurum was built in the mid-nineteenth century, but it was poorly maintained and almost unusable. What was needed was a railroad connecting Eastern Anatolia and Iran to the rest of the world via the Black Sea. The plan to construct a railroad

---

2 Ibid., p. 35.

3 Ibid., p. 36.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

between Trabzon and Erzurum, which historically was a commercial transit route between Europe and Asia, was born of developments in transportation technology as well as the re-discovered importance of the route.<sup>6</sup> The plan was to extend the railway all the way to Doğu Beyazıt, which lies on the Iranian border. In this way, both trade with Iran would increase and surplus products could be sent to foreign markets. It was thought that this would increase the value of those products and bring prosperity to both manufacturers and the region as a whole. Such commercial transactions would increase trade in Trabzon and contribute to the prosperity of the city as well as its economic, military, and strategic importance. However, that dream would not be realized until years later because of geographical conditions, lack of financial resources, and conflicts of interest among the Great Powers.

Russia thought that a railway built in the Eastern Black Sea and Eastern Anatolian regions would conflict with its own commercial and strategic interests, so it first cornered Iran and then the Ottoman Empire about the issue. In the early 1900s, Russia signed a treaty with the Ottoman Empire forcing the Ottomans to agree to build the railroad themselves or grant concessions to the Russians in exchange, thereby preventing other foreign powers from getting a foothold in the region. In 1907 Russia convinced Britain during the Reval Talks to stay out of the region and in 1910 Germany agreed in the Postdam Talks to stay away as well, thereby ensuring that Russian interests would be protected.<sup>7</sup>

After the proclamation of the Second Constitution, the issue of constructing a railway between Trabzon and Erzurum was often discussed in news editorials. As the treaty with the Russians had expired by that time, the Ottoman Empire was free to construct a railroad or commission its construction, which brought the issue to the foreground in the Trabzon press as well.

A report penned on 19 July 1909 by H.Z. Longworth, the British consul in Trabzon, noted that public expectations about a railroad were on the rise, but he added that such a project did not realistically stand a chance as far as time and financial resources were concerned. He also stated that the public wanted a railroad between Trabzon and Erzurum as well as between Samsun and Sivas, which would connect the Black Sea coast to the Anatolian hinterland. Longworth emphasized that the Trabzon-Erzurum line was indeed important and that Russia was keeping a close eye on any developments in that regard. The consul noted that meetings were held following extensive coverage of the issue in the Trabzon press and it was decided that action would be taken together

---

6 Murat Küçükkuşurlu, "Meşrutiyet Devrinde Trabzon-Erzurum Demiryolu Teşebbüsleri", *Osmanlı Araştırmaları*, XXXII, 2008, p. 283.

7 Ibid., pp. 291-292.

with the representatives of hinterland cities and towns. As a result of these endeavours, an application was sent to parliament asking it to be the guarantor for a 3 million pound debt at 5% interest for the construction and management of the railway line. They said they could post 2% of customs revenue as collateral, which corresponded to 80,000 pounds. The city administrators wanted British firms to bid on the deal even though Russia was putting pressure on them. Longworth stated that as a result of a meeting he had with city administrators, he believed that British companies could bid on the Trabzon-Erzurum railway project but expressed concerns about when that could happen.<sup>8</sup>

A Trabzon-Erzurum railway project was again on parliament's agenda in 1909, and as it was accepted in principle, it was sent to the Ministry of Public Works. In early 1910, Beyazıt representative Süleyman Sudi and seventy-one of his associates made a motion to bring the issue to the agenda again, asking the government to take swift action.<sup>9</sup>

The issue long occupied public opinion in Trabzon, as can be seen in articles published in newspapers in 1910. One such article reported that three engineers sent by the Ministry of Public Works went to the city to carry out preliminary surveys for a railroad between Trabzon and Erzurum. They were greeted by city dignitaries upon disembarking and citizens accompanied them with local music.<sup>10</sup>

Construction of a railroad was considered to be a point of privilege for foreign companies because of the financial difficulties of the state and the inability of local firms to carry out such a project. In negotiations with foreign companies, however, the Trabzon-Erzurum line was considered to be secondary.<sup>11</sup> A later piece of news reported that the Ottoman government had attempted to borrow money from France for the construction of railway lines between Samsun and Sivas and Erzurum and Van, and that Sadrazam Hakkı Paşa and the Minister of Finance, Cavid Bey, went to Paris to strike a deal.<sup>12</sup> The dignitaries of Trabzon immediately understood that the Trabzon-Erzurum line was not going to be built. Mayor Barutçuzade Hacı Ahmet Bey sent a telegram to *Sadaret* (the Office of the Grand Vizier) expressing his disappointment and demanding that the situation be rectified. Barutçuzade Hacı Ahmet Bey wrote in the telegram

---

8 PRO., F.O., 195/2334, 19 July 1909, p. 90.

9 Meclis-i Mebusan Zabıt Ceridesi, Devre: 1, İçtima Senesi: 2, vol. 2, 26 Kanûnisâni 1325 (8 February 1910), pp. 190-193.

10 "Mühendislerin Vürudu", *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 165, 31 Mart 1326 (13 April 1910), p. 2.

11 Küçükuşurlu, *ibid.*, p. 304.

12 "Asya-i Osmanîde Şimendüfer Hattı", *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 260, 9 Mart 1327 (22 March 1911), pp. 1-2.

how important the Trabzon-Erzurum and Samsun-Sivas railway lines were, a fact that had been confirmed by parliament. However, he went on to say that as only the Samsun-Sivas line had been considered for construction and the Trabzon-Erzurum line was postponed, he held a meeting at City Hall where it was decided that they would continue to push for the construction of that crucial railway which would revive trade in the region as well as throughout the country, and that they would not stop until they got a positive answer. He demanded that the decisions of the committee regarding the construction of the Trabzon-Erzurum railway line be taken into consideration as it would have a positive impact on numerous provinces, cities, and towns in social, economic, and military terms.<sup>13</sup>

The Grand Viziership consulted with the Ministry of Commerce and Ministry of Public Works, and based on their replies sent a telegram from the Ministry of the Interior to the province of Trabzon. The telegram stated that the engineers sent to the region to find a route for the Trabzon-Erzurum line reported back that the mountain range between Trabzon and Bayburt would make construction difficult but noted that a line that followed the Harşit Valley from Tirebolu to Erzurum could be more viable. It was noted that such a line would benefit all the towns between the coast and Erzurum and that construction would start as soon as the necessary funds were procured.<sup>14</sup>

In 1911, the French company *Regie Generale des Chemins de Fer* expressed a desire to construct the regional railway lines, which brought the subject to the foreground again. Local newspapers reported that the company was going to send a committee to survey the regions of Samsun-Sivas, Erzurum-Trabzon, and Harput for railway lines.<sup>15</sup> Approximately twenty days later, other local newspapers stated that a committee led by an engineer named Verdingsman from *Regie Generale des Chemins de Fer* had gone to Trabzon to survey the routes for the Sivas-Erzincan-Erzurum, Sivas-Harput, and Trabzon-Erzurum lines.<sup>16</sup> Other articles noted that the aforementioned engineers had set off from Trabzon to Erzurum.<sup>17</sup> An article penned by İhsan for *Envar-ı Vicdan* reported about the construction of a Trabzon-Erzurum railway line along with a settlement made with *Regie Generale des Chemins de Fer*. The author emphasized the necessity

---

13 BOA., DH. İD., 4.1-19, 15. R. 1329 (16 March 1911).

14 BOA., DH. İD., 4.1-19, 15. R. 1329 (16 March 1911).

15 “Şimendüfer İnşaatı”, *Envar-ı Vicdan*, No: 96, 8 Temmuz 1327 (21 July 1911), inside cover.

16 “Şimendüfer Mühendislerinin Muvasalatı”, *Trabzon’da Meşveret*, No: 300, 27 Temmuz 1327 (9 August 1911), p. 2.

17 “Şimendüfer Mühendisleri Geldi, Gidiyor”, *Envar-ı Vicdan*, No: 99, 29 Temmuz 1327 (11 August 1327), inside cover.

of that line regardless of the cost, as it would consolidate public support for the constitutional regime.<sup>18</sup> That undertaking was not realized in 1911 or 1912 because of Russian pressure on both the Ottoman Empire and France.<sup>19</sup>

The Trabzon-Erzurum railway line came to the agenda once again just before World War I and it was a major issue in the region. The *Şimendüfer Hey'et-i Fa'alesi* (Active Committee of Railroads) sent numerous telegrams to the Grand Vizier's Office, Ministry of the Interior and parliament between May and June of 1914, saying that the line had to be prioritized over the other Anatolian lines. The telegrams were signed by president of *Şimendüfer Hey'et-i Fa'alesi* Cemal Bey, Catholic and Armenian delegates, Greek Metropolitan Hrisantos, Trabzon Müftü Mahir, the president of the Chamber of Commerce, Hami, and Deputy Mayor Mehmet Avni, as well as members Yorgi, Kemal Hikmet, Sokrati, Osman, Sadi, and Mithat,<sup>20</sup> indicating who was on the committee. In 1914, the governor of Trabzon, Samih Rıfat Bey, also sent a telegram to the Ministry of the Interior stating that there was a pressing need for a railway line in and around Trabzon, and he noted that a committee had been established by the people of the region. In April 1914, negotiations with the French and subsequent preparations that had lasted until July 1914 fell apart with the outbreak of World War I.<sup>21</sup>

### 2.3. Port Problems in Trabzon

Historically Trabzon was a key commercial and strategic city as it was located on a side branch of the historic Silk Road. In the nineteenth century, Trabzon became even more important as the volume of trade increased in the Black Sea and steamships came into use. The port in the district of Çömlekçi was not suitable for large ships so merchandise had to be brought ashore on small rented boats,<sup>22</sup> meaning that a fully equipped port needed to be built. Port construction started in 1879 thanks to the efforts of the Minister of Public Works, Hasan Fehmi Paşa, and continued until 1903 but was not completed. The Committee of Union and Progress devoted special attention to the construction of railway, highway, and port infrastructure starting in 1908 to stimulate economic growth.<sup>23</sup>

---

18 İhsan, "Şimendüferimiz İçin", *Envar-ı Vicdan*, No: 99, 29 Temmuz 1327 (11 August 1327), pp. 1-3.

19 Küçükuşurlu, *ibid.*, p. 314.

20 *Ibid.*, pp. 314-316.

21 *Ibid.*, pp. 317-320.

22 Yaşar Baytal, "Trabzon Limanı İnşası", *History Studies*, vol. 5. No: 3, June 2013, p. 23.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 24.



The Trabzon port was high on the public agenda for a long time. In an article written by M. Sadık for the 22<sup>nd</sup> issue of *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, the need for a new port was discussed in detail. The author emphasized that Trabzon was the gateway to five or six hinterland cities as well as Iran, and that with little effort the volume of trade could be increased in the city. He stated that a decade earlier few ships stopped in Trabzon but now five or six ships came by weekly to unload as many as 20,000 products, which meant that in a couple of years that volume could reach the port in a single day. It was noted that the busiest period for the port was July and December, which was when the Black Sea was at its roughest, so some ships were forced to leave without completely unloading their cargo and accidents were commonplace. Such accidents, the author argued, resulted in commercial losses, casualties, and the sinking of rowboats. He stated that those problems were the result of inadequate infrastructure. The article also suggested that an Ottoman company could be established for the completion of the half-finished port, which would enhance trade and provide employment for the people of the region. The author also pointed out that not only Trabzon but also nearby cities and towns would benefit from the port and demanded that the necessary procedures be initiated as soon as possible.<sup>24</sup> In another article published in a different issue, the author argued that a committee had to be set up for the construction of the Trabzon port and that fees could be collected for goods that were unloaded to pay for the construction.<sup>25</sup> In another issue of the same newspaper, an article announced that a protocol for the Trabzon and Samsun ports was going to be signed with *İtibar-ı Milli Bank* (National Prestige Bank) after being reviewed by the Cabinet.<sup>26</sup>

On 21 August 1911, an agreement was signed between the Ottoman Empire and *İtibar-ı Milli Bankası*,<sup>27</sup> news of which was very warmly received in the Trabzon press. Articles with striking headlines reported about the engineers to be sent to Trabzon by *İtibar-ı Milli Bankası* to do preliminary surveys.<sup>28</sup> However, all these efforts fell to the wayside with the outbreak of the Balkan Wars and then World War I.

---

24 M. Sadık, "Bir Limana Muhtacı", *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 22, 1 Teşrînisâni 1324 (14 November 1908), p. 1.

25 "Trabzon Liman ve Rıhtımı", *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 24, 8 Teşrînisâni 1324 (21 November 1908), pp. 3-4.

26 "Trabzon ve Samsun Limanları", *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 302, 3 Ağustos 1327 (16 August 1911), p. 1.

27 Baytal, *ibid.*, p. 24.

28 "Trabzon Limanı", *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 306, 17 Ağustos 1327 (30 August 1911), p. 2; "Trabzon Limanı Artık Yapılacak", *Envar-ı Vicdan*, No: 102, 19 Ağustos 1327 (1 September 1911), inside cover.

## 2.4. The Trabzon General Directorship of Customs

Another institution that was influential in Trabzon's economy was the Trabzon General Directorship of Customs. Customs was important because it connected the city and region to the outside world, and the customs organization and its work also concerned foreign missions. The reports of the British consulate in Trabzon reveal that the British closely followed developments in customs and intervened on behalf of British merchants and other merchants who traded with Britain to protect their rights in their dealings with the Ottoman authorities.

A report made by the British consulate in Trabzon dated 7 March 1908 stated that a new pier was being built by the municipality as well as a new transit depot. However, it was noted that construction on the transit depot was going very slowly; the blueprints for the port and the new transit depot were included in the report.<sup>29</sup> A report written a month later said that some progress had been made on the new pier but construction had been halted upon orders of the General Directorship of Customs in Istanbul and that an inspector was checking the pier construction. The same report stated that the governor wanted to continue with work on the transit depot and extend a narrow-gauge railway from the coast to the customs office, the current depot, and the new transit depot that was under construction.<sup>30</sup> A few days later, it was reported that new orders from the General Directorship of Customs in Istanbul dictated that extra taxes would be placed on merchants to cover the cost of completing the new pier.<sup>31</sup> In yet another report written a month later, the pier was said to have been extended a little more but no progress had been made on construction of the new transit depot construction.<sup>32</sup>

An archival Ottoman document dated 26 May 1908 (13 Mayıs 1324) stated that Trabzon Customs Director Şükrü Efendi and Trabzon General Director Galip Bey had been relieved of their duties as the result of a corruption investigation and that Erzurum Customs Director Mehmet Emin Bey had been appointed as the new director.<sup>33</sup> A British consulate report dated 10 September 1908 stated that work to develop the Customs Department in the Trabzon port had come to a halt and a new Customs Director, Mehmet Emin Bey, had been appointed. The report indicated that the new director held sway over the customs officers and he made a speech to them which was published in a

---

29 PRO., F.O., 195/2303, 7 March 1908, p. 53.

30 PRO., F.O., 195/2303, 7 April 1908, p. 69.

31 PRO., F.O., 195/2303, 11 April 1908, p. 77.

32 PRO., F.O., 195/2303, 9 May 1908, p. 100.

33 BOA., Y.A.RES., 1326. 4. 25 (27 May 1908).

local newspaper. The consul emphasized that the customs officers were more diligent after the appointment of the new director and the previously existing system of tips had been abolished.<sup>34</sup> According to an article published in the 28<sup>th</sup> issue of *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, corruption was rampant in the pre-constitutional era as regards customs, and the state had suffered huge financial losses. The article claimed that with the proclamation of the constitution, the Trabzon Customs Directorship was diligent and made a profit of over 5,000 lira within a three and a half months period despite the boycotts on Austrian and Bulgarian goods. The article emphasized the role of Trabzon Customs Director Mehmet Emin Bey and the other customs officers in this accomplishment and they were thanked for their efforts.<sup>35</sup> A British consulate report dated 19 May 1909 indicated that while no progress had been made on the construction of the customs building, the consul praised Mayor Nemlizade Cemal Bey and Customs Director Mehmet Emin Bey for their hard work.<sup>36</sup>

A British consulate report dating from 10 January 1910 mentioned that there was still no progress in the Trabzon customs construction and that a new Customs Director by the name of Hürrem Bey had been appointed. The report emphasized that with Hürrem Bey's appointment, there was an improvement in customs irregularities and that complaints had decreased. The consul complained about the existence and influence of boatmen and porters who held an important position in the workings of customs and noted that Ottoman officers were powerless against them. The consul listed the reasonable demands of shipping agencies who ran into trouble with the boatmen and porters as follows:

1. Every guild needs to have an office and a leader.
2. A constant and comprehensible tariff system needs to be implemented.
3. There needs to be a constant number of, let us say, 30 boatmen and 80 porters.
4. These guilds need to supervise the safe docking of merchandise.

The British consul stated that such demands could be met only if the embassy in Istanbul put pressure on the Sublime Port and if the Sublime Port put pressure on the Governor of Trabzon.<sup>37</sup>

Another consulate report, this one dated 13 April 1910, stated that the pier in the port had been completed and that the boatmen could now easily

---

34 PRO., F.O., 195/2303, 10 September 1908, p. 190.

35 "Numune-i Sa'ý ve Himmet ve Trabzon Gümrükçüleri", *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 28, 22 Teşrînisâni 1324 (5 December 1908), pp. 3-4.

36 PRO., F.O., 195/2334, 19 May 1909, p. 57.

37 PRO., F.O., 195/2362, 10 January 1910, p. 2.

load and unload their goods. The report also said that construction of the pier, which had been started by the municipality, had been completed by the General Directorship of Customs.<sup>38</sup> A consulate report dated 8 September 1910 stated that the new customs director, Enver Bey, was treating shipping companies harshly and that the Russian and French consuls had also complained about this issue. Enver Bey was accused of being incompetent and uncivil, which slowed down customs proceedings a great deal.<sup>39</sup>

In another British consulate report dating from 16 March 1911, there was a complaint that crates belonging to the company Sudbeaziyan and Brothers, the largest importer of British merchandise in Trabzon, had been opened and inspected one by one. It was also noted that even though Enver Bey had been relieved of duty, customs officers continued that practice.<sup>40</sup>

## 2.5. The Private Sector in Trabzon

The Unionists sought to make economic progress after the proclamation of the Second Constitution and create a national capitalist class. In this period, it was thought that Ottoman citizens could pool their capital to establish companies and set the Ottoman economy right by making it independent. Such ideas had arisen in Istanbul but they were soon felt in Trabzon as well. Various publications emphasized that it was not right to expect everything from the state and that the state could not solve all the economic problems in the country so citizens had to share the burden.

An article that appeared in the 22<sup>nd</sup> issue of *Trabzon'da Meşveret* mentioned that prior to the Constitutional period, citizens were discouraged from establishing companies, so little commercial progress had been made. The article argued that in the new era it was possible to establish new companies, make money, revive commercial life, maintain public works, and keep the poor from going abroad to make a living.<sup>41</sup>

In another issue of the same newspaper, an article argued that the economic progress of Europe owed its success to companies and that in the nineteenth century companies started “economic warfare” instead of bloody wars. However, the author argued that there were not many entrepreneurs in the Ottoman Empire who could set up companies and that merchants needed to fill that

---

38 PRO., F.O., 195/2362, 13 April 1910, p. 30.

39 PRO., F.O., 195/2362, 8 September 1910, p. 83.

40 PRO., F.O., 195/2386, 16 March 1911, p. 9.

41 M. Sadık, “Bir Limana Muhtacı”, *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 22, 1 Teşrînisâni 1324 (14 November 1908), p. 1.

gap.<sup>42</sup> In a different issue, an article claimed that many people had emigrated to America from Anatolia in the previous five to ten years because of hunger and poverty. Such emigrants, the author argued, included not just Armenians fleeing the absolutist regime but also other Ottoman citizens. The argument was made that those waves of emigration depleted the workforce and reduced the number of skilled workers, and, as such, had to be dealt with. The author mentioned that wealthy entrepreneurs needed to pool their resources in order to set up companies, create new job opportunities, and contribute to the economy. The article added that economic progress was now possible under the constitutional regime and that the Ottoman Empire could only make economic progress through the efforts of entrepreneurs.<sup>43</sup> Such news reports and articles published in *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, which of course was the mouthpiece of the Unionists, suggest that the Unionists placed great importance on companies in achieving economic progress.

News articles encouraging corporatization and private enterprises turned out to be quite influential. An article in the 20<sup>th</sup> issue of *Trabzon'da Meşveret* noted that fourteen merchants had come together to set up a joint-stock corporation with 10,000 shares, each of which was valued at one Lira, in order to establish a brick and tile factory, and the entrepreneurs were thanked for their efforts.<sup>44</sup> Some articles in the newspaper *Feyz* announced that a joint-stock company had been established under the name of the Trabzon Brick and Tile Factory Corp., and each of their shares were valued at two lira. It was reported that the founders each bought 1,000 shares, and the founders were thanked for their work and the author wished them the best of success.<sup>45</sup>

Another example of corporatization in Trabzon was the construction of a drinking water pipeline. Articles in the 226<sup>th</sup> issue of *Trabzon'da Meşveret* reported that a company was being established to pipe fresh water from the district of Kalyon to the city because the water quality in Değirmendere was so low. It was argued that people would thus be protected from the diseases brought on by contaminated water.<sup>46</sup> An article in another issue stated that since the municipality could not afford to make improvements in the infrastructure, a meeting was organized by the governor together with the mayor, dignitaries,

---

42 “Bizde Şirketler”, *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No:158, 6 Mart 1326 (19 March 1910), p. 1.

43 “Erbab-ı Teşebbüs Lazım”, *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 162, 20 Mart 1326 (2 April 1910), p. 1.

44 “Memleketimiz İçin Mühim Bir Teşebbüs”, *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 20, 25 Teşrînisâni 1324 (7 November 1908), p. 4.

45 “Trabzon”, *Feyz*, No: 72, 18 Mayıs 1325 (31 May 1909), inside cover.

46 “Kalyon Suyu ve Şirket Teşkili”, *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 226, 3 Teşrînisâni 1326 (16 November 1910), p. 2.

and merchants in order to find a solution. In the end they decided to form a committee to raise funds and then establish a company. The governor was appointed head of the committee and the Greek Metropolit was his deputy. The members consisted of Nemlizade Cemal Bey, Banker Kostaki Efendi, Vasil Yuvanidi Efendi, Fosturopolu Yorgi Efendi, Arslanyan Haçık Efendi, Hacıhamdizade Hacı Hami Efendi, Çarlahazade Hacı Kadir Efendi, Kırzade Şevki Efendi, Hoştıraser Efendi, Mahufyan Onik, and Mısıryan Oseb Efendi.<sup>47</sup>

Another project involved tramway construction privileges. Newspapers announced that the district of Soğuksu was unable to develop because transportation was limited even though it was the Çamlıca<sup>48</sup> of Trabzon. The owner of the Kisarna mineral water company proposed the construction of a tramline, which was being considered by the municipality.<sup>49</sup>

Efforts at corporatization were influential in maritime trade as well. Newspapers published articles stating that even though the Ottoman Empire had the longest coastline after Britain, it was incapable of effectively engaging in maritime trade. One article stated that economic progress required the setting up of companies and purchasing of ships, as well as transporting Ottoman passengers and cargo on Ottoman ships.<sup>50</sup> Another article mentioned that the local public was quite impressed with ships bearing the Ottoman flag in the Black Sea line<sup>51</sup> and yet another stated that Ottoman ships that had started to operate with the reorganization of the Ottoman *Seyr-i Sefain* Administration needed support. It was also mentioned that the ship *Gülcemal* would make voyages to Trabzon.<sup>52</sup> The *İttihad Seyr-i Sefain* Corp., which had been established by Ottoman citizens, had shareholders in Trabzon as well, according to articles in local newspapers.<sup>53</sup>

In addition to such discussions about private enterprise in Trabzon, it was reported that the Ottoman Merchants Club, which had been established with the aim of increasing trade in Trabzon and improving cooperation among

---

47 “Dünkü İçtima”, *Trabzon’da Meşveret*, No: 277, 7 Mayıs 1327 (20 May 1911), p. 1.

48 The highest hill of Istanbul which had a panoramic view of Bosphorus.

49 “Tramvay İmtiyazı”, *Envar-ı Vicdan*, No: 108, 6 Kanûnievvel 1327 (19 December 1911), inside back cover.

50 Naci, “Osmanlı Vapurları”, *Trabzon’da Meşveret*, No: 180, 22 Mayıs 1326 (4 June 1910), p. 1.

51 “Osmanlı Vapurları”, *Trabzon’da Meşveret*, No: 284, 1 Haziran 1327 (14 June 1911), p. 1.

52 “Trabzonlular Gülcemal Geliyor”, *Trabzon’da Meşveret*, No: 289, 18 June 1327 (1 July 1911), p. 1.

53 “İttihad Seyr-i Sefa’in Şirketi Hissedarına”, *Trabzon’da Meşveret*, No: 319, 5 Teşrinievvel 1327 (18 October 1911), p. 3.

merchants, faced closure as it was not living up to its own expectations.<sup>54</sup> The article noted that the poor faced hardships because of the high price of wheat, corn, barley, and flour. The Trabzon Chamber of Commerce had applied to the Ministry of the Interior to request permission to import duty-free grain but the claim was made that such a move would benefit merchants rather than the poor.<sup>55</sup>

## 2.6. Agriculture in Trabzon

Agriculture was a component of Trabzon's economy even though the area was not very suitable for agriculture because of its rough terrain. Also, agriculture did not develop in the region because primitive methods were used, proper crops were not chosen, and the small plots of arable land always changed hands because of inheritance issues. Also, there was a general understanding of agriculture which saw it as a way to meet the needs of the family rather than large-scale production, with the exception of a few crops.<sup>56</sup>

Corn, white beans, wheat, barley, rye, hazelnuts, and tobacco were the primary crops in central Trabzon. There was not enough corn, wheat, barley, or rye to meet local needs, but white beans, hazelnuts, and tobacco were export crops.<sup>57</sup> In 1910, 70% of the white beans grown in Trabzon were exported to the United States, 20% went to Europe, and the remainder went to Istanbul, according to records. In the following year, 70% of the crops were sent to the United States, 20% to France, and the rest to various countries.<sup>58</sup>

Another important local crop was hazelnuts, which grow well in the damp climate of the region and yield quality crops. The majority of the harvest was sold to Germany, Egypt, the United States, France, Britain, Russia, Austria-Hungary, and Romania, and the rest were sold in Ottoman lands.<sup>59</sup>

The most profitable crop in Trabzon was tobacco. However, an agreement between the Ottoman Empire and Ottoman Public Debt Administration stipulated that the processing of tobacco was only to be carried out by the Regie Administration monopoly (*Memalik-i Osmaniye Duhanları Müsterekül-Menfaa*

---

54 "Osmanlı Tüccar Kulübü", *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 59, 18 Mart 1325 (31 March 1909), p. 3.

55 M. Sadık, "Fukara İstifade Edebilecek Mi?", *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 56, 7 Mart 1325 (20 March 1909), pp. 1-2.

56 Ahmet Karaçavuş, "XIX. Yüzyıl Sonu ve XX. Yüzyıl Başlarında Trabzon'da Tarım", *Uluslararası Karadeniz İncelemeleri Dergisi*, No: 9, Fall / 2010, pp. 48-57.

57 Abdulvahap Hayri, *İktisadi Trabzon*, ed. Melek Öksüz, Trabzon: Serander Yayınları, 2008, pp. 72-78.

58 *Ibid.*, p. 74.

59 *Ibid.*, pp. 77-78.

*Regie Şirketi*).<sup>60</sup> The relationship between tobacco farmers and the Regie Administration was strained, and that problem plagued the public as well. Tobacco farmers complained about the construction of depots, licencing, low prices, disregard for contracts, and the abusive behaviour of the guards, while the Regie Administration complained about unlicensed tobacco production and the corruption of state officials in terms of tobacco smuggling.<sup>61</sup>

The Regie issue continued to be a contentious topic in Trabzon even after the proclamation of the Second Constitution, and tobacco farmers continued to rail against the oppressive Regie Administration and its guards. From September 1908 until February 1909, an intensive struggle brought to the surface previously unexpressed demands. The newspaper *Feyz* published news about the demonstrations of tobacco farmers, backing them in their cause.<sup>62</sup> Female guards working for the Regie Administration carried out random body searches of female passers-by, forcing them to remove their headscarves, which stirred up public discontent. After receiving some complaints, the local government demanded that the involved parties be punished because the Regie guards did not have the authority to carry out such searches.<sup>63</sup> In the 16<sup>th</sup> issue of *Feyz*, there was a complaint about the abusive behaviour of the Regie guards and the author threatened that there would be uprisings if the abusive guards were not replaced.<sup>64</sup>

An article in the 63<sup>rd</sup> issue of the same newspaper reported that tobacco farmers applied to the governorship to force the Regie Administration to respect the conditions of its contracts. It was announced that even though the governorship of Trabzon sent their petition to the relevant authorities, no response came, so the farmers decided to hold a rally. After the rally, the farmers intended to apply to the Grand Vizier's Office, and should that fail, they would go on strike. *Feyz* accused the Regie Administration of only adhering to clauses that favoured their interests and disregarded those that helped the farmers. The article also proclaimed its support for the farmers and expressed hope that the government would rule in their favour.<sup>65</sup> It seems, however, that the farmers may not have been the only ones facing problems. An article in the 200<sup>th</sup> issue

---

60 Kudret Emiroğlu, "Trabzon'da İkinci Meşrutiyet'te Tütün Rejisiyle Mücadele", *Trabzon*, No: 7, 1993, p. 34.

61 Filiz Dıġıroġlu, *Memalik-i Osmaniye Duhanları Müşterekül-Menfaa Reji Şirketi: Trabzon Reji İdaresi, 1883-1914*, İstanbul: Osmanlı Bankası Arşiv ve Araştırma Merkezi, 2007, p. 61.

62 Emiroğlu, *ibid.*, p. 35.

63 *Ibid.*, pp. 35-36.

64 *Ibid.*, p. 36.

65 "Trabzon", *Feyz*, No: 63, 10 Mart 1325 (23 March 1909), inside back cover.



of *Trabzon'da Meşveret* reported that the Regie guards could not make ends meet with their current salaries and had asked for a raise.<sup>66</sup>

The questionable practices of the Regie Administration were also discussed in parliament and the issue was raised about whether or not it should be abolished when its contract expired.<sup>67</sup> However, the economic difficulties brought on by the war in Tripoli and the Balkan Wars forced the Ottoman government to borrow money from the Regie Administration and therefore renew the contract and overlook its abusive and unfair practices.<sup>68</sup>

Numerous feasibility studies were carried out as a way to improve agriculture in Trabzon so that greater yields and revenue could be obtained. A report written by Ohannes Efendi, Trabzon's Agricultural Inspector, titled *Trabzon Vilayeti Ziraatının Islahı Hakkında Layiha* ("Project Concerning the Improvement of Agriculture in Trabzon Province") contained ten main topics. First was the protection of life, property, and honour, with an emphasis on labour and work. Second was the need to reorganize taxation. Third was the importance of the construction of roads, railroads, canals, and ports. The fourth and fifth articles concerned the establishment of agricultural chambers of commerce and the implementation of legal regulations. The sixth clause stressed that the government needed to encourage people to set up *Cemiyet-i Ziraiyye-i Hayriyye* (Beneficial Agriculture Societies). The seventh article said that every *sancak* should have one agricultural official and that every province should have one agricultural engineer. The eighth article stipulated that a system of agricultural exhibitions and awards should be put into place. The ninth article stated that funds needed to be provided for agricultural chambers of commerce. The tenth proposed the establishment of a school of agriculture in the province of Trabzon.<sup>69</sup>

Ohannes Efendi's list included significant points but the circumstances at the time and the outbreak of World War I made it impossible to implement them. Agriculture in Trabzon had remained inefficient for a long time because of the geographically rough terrain, rudimentary methods used, and the wars that plagued the Ottoman Empire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

---

66 "Reji Kolcuları", *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 200, 31 Temmuz 1326 (13 August 1910), p. 2.

67 Emiroğlu, *ibid.*, p. 45.

68 *Ibid.*, p. 45.

69 Trabzon Ziraat Müfettişi Ohannes, "Meclis-i Umumiye Takdim Olunan Trabzon Vilayeti Ziraatinin Islahı Hakkında Layihadır", *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 60, 21 Mart 1325 (3 April 1909), pp. 2-3.

## 2.7. Various Issues Regarding Commerce in Trabzon

The British consulate in Trabzon sent a report to their embassy in Istanbul about commerce in Trabzon. The report, dated 5 October 1910, contained information about a steamship line that would connect the Black Sea coast to the United Kingdom<sup>70</sup> as well as observations concerning import and export rates in and around Trabzon. According to the consul's report, 30 percent of the 90,000 tons of imports going to Trabzon originated from other regions in the Ottoman Empire and 52 percent of exports were sent to Istanbul and other regions of the empire. Also, it was reported that in 1910, there were 39,600 tons of imports and 31,300 tons of exports from Samsun, 18,500 tons of imports and 9,800 tons of exports from Giresun and 7,000 tons of imports and 6,000 tons of exports from İnebolu. The increase in maritime trade in 1910 was attributed to a high yield of hazelnuts that year, with production in the region increasing to 50,000,000 pounds. In the Samsun region, twice as much tobacco was harvested compared to the previous year. It was said that all of the produce was of good quality, with the exception of beans, and that was expected to improve with the coming rains. Also, the report noted that some metal ore was to be exported to England or the United States, which had the potential to offer opportunities for shipping, but that would not benefit Britain if the metal ore was to be sold to other mining companies because they would use their own steamships.<sup>71</sup>

The consul wrote that he found out from the local agent of an English shipping company that large profits could be made doing business in the Black Sea and he noted that the steamships used would have to have luxury cabins for first and second class as well as a lot of space for third class passengers and a large depot for sheep. The report indicated that every year 110,000 to 120,000 sheep were transported from Trabzon to Istanbul, which made for very good maritime business. The consul pointed out that the steamships would have to weigh between 3,000 and 4,000 tons and travel at 12 naval miles per hour in order to have a competitive edge over other ships in the Black Sea. Also, the ships would be required to stop over in all the port cities up to Batum. Since it would be too costly to travel directly to Britain, the agent suggested that the line could connect via Alexandria or Malta. The agent also added that such a line would be able to charge between 600 to 800 pounds for the transport of cargo and passengers per ship if a regular travel schedule was established.<sup>72</sup>

---

70 PRO., F.O., 195/2362, 5 October 1910, pp. 80-81.

71 Ibid., p. 80.

72 Ibid., p. 81.

The consul also stated that travel had increased with the proclamation of constitutionalism and the abolition of domestic passports, and that was expected to increase even more as the country developed. In addition, he noted that because of the boycott, Greek cargo and passengers were carried by other lines but he stated that it was a temporary situation.<sup>73</sup>

The information in the consul's report indicates that maritime trade on a Black Sea line through Alexandria or Malta indeed had the potential to prove profitable for Britain. The temporary boycott on Greek ships had arisen because of the Crete issue, and the Black Sea trade had changed hands, so the introduction of a British shipping company in the region at that point was considered a smart move. Also, the report makes it clear what kinds of preparations Britain made before launching an enterprise.

In that era, however, epidemics, especially cholera, had proven to be problematic for the commercial life of Trabzon. A newspaper article reported that people had retreated to the villages because of a cholera epidemic and that shops and businesses were closed. That was why commercial life in Trabzon almost came to a halt at one point. Afterwards, the authorities increased preventive measures in order to revive trade in the city.<sup>74</sup>

Some news stories about the boatmen in Trabzon indicated that they wanted to organize so they could increase their bargaining power because they had difficulty making ends meet, but reactions were fierce.<sup>75</sup> Another article noted that boatmen pooled their money and collected 600 lira under the leadership of Yahya Kâhya<sup>76</sup> to donate to the military, navy, and the needy, as well as to save the schools in the districts of Aya Filibo and İskenderpaşa, as they were

---

73 Ibid.

74 Naci, "Şehrimizde Buhran-ı Ticaret," *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 214 18 Eylül 1326 (1 October 1910), p. 1.

75 Umum Kayıkçı Esnafı, "Sergüzeşt ve Temenniyatımız: Vaki' olan Hücumlara", *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 194, 10 Temmuz 1326 (23 July 1910), p. 4.

76 Yahya Kâhya (1885-1922) was a member of a branch of Karaosmanoğlu family from Manisa which had settled in Trabzon. He was elected as the leader of the boatmen in Trabzon when he was just seventeen years old. He had become an important figure for the Unionists in Trabzon as the leader of the boatmen who had control of the port trade. He was very active in the boycotts against Austria, Bulgaria, and Greece. He was also very active during the Balkan Wars. He also took part in some operations carried out by the Special Organization (*Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa*) during World War I. He was suspected of killing Mustafa Suphi, one of the leaders of Turkish Communist Party and his associates, during the National Struggle for Independence. Yahya Kahya supported Enver Paşa against Mustafa Kemal Paşa during the National Struggle. He was assassinated on 3 July 1922. For further information, see: Uğur Üçüncü, *Milli Mücadele Yıllarında Trabzon'da İttihatçı Bir Sima: Kâhya Yahya*, Trabzon: Serander Yayınevi, 2015.

about to be closed.<sup>77</sup> Because they were guilds, porters, boatmen, and bargemen were under Kara Kemal's control in Istanbul and made up the street force of the Unionists. Under the leadership of Yahya Kahya, the boatmen in Trabzon were the Unionists' brawn, and as such they controlled and monopolized the loading of ships and transport. Yahya Kâhya was an ardent supporter of the Committee, and as with the case of the boycott, they influenced politics in Trabzon.

As the municipality did not have the budget to install telephone lines from the governorship of Trabzon to the city hall, customs office, port administration, precincts, and chamber of commerce, Mösyö Sani, who was a music aficionado, gave a concert at the theatre hall in Tuzluçesme and the revenue from the concert went to the installation of that phone line.<sup>78</sup> However, six months after work had begun, only a few points in the city were connected, which provoked reactions.<sup>79</sup>

During the constitutional period, the municipality of Trabzon did not make much progress. Numerous news articles reported about unlit streets, muddy roads, unsupervised bakeries, and a lack of phone lines, so it can be inferred that many projects never saw the light of day because of insufficient funds and technical difficulties. In short, the dynamism of the Unionists in coming up with projects was not commensurate with their ability to complete them.

## **2.8. Boycotts in Trabzon:**

### **2.8.1. Boycott against Austria and Bulgaria**

On 24 July 1908, after the proclamation of the Second Constitution, the Ottoman Empire faced numerous foreign policy problems. On 5 October 1908, the Bulgarian Principality declared independence and on 6 October 1908 the Austro-Hungarian Empire announced that it was annexing Bosnia-Herzegovina as it had controlled it *de facto* since the 1878 Berlin Treaty. This shocked the Unionists as they believed that the constitutional regime would solve many of the empire's problems.

The Ottoman Empire did not recognize these political *fait accompli* and protested them. However, it was not deemed possible to wage war at a time

---

77 "Kayıkçıların Ma'arife Büyük Bir Mu'aveneti", *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 320, 8 Teşrinievvel 1327 (21 October 1911), p. 2.

78 "Telefon Tesisi ve Konser", *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 172, 24 Nisan 1236 (7 May 1910), p. 1.

79 "Aylar Geçti, Telefon Te'sis Edilemiyor", *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 306, 17 Ağustos 1327 (30 August 1911), pp. 1-2.

when the new regime was being established. All of these political developments, which resulted in boycotts against Bulgaria and Austria-Hungary through the manipulation of the Unionists, were protested by Ottoman society. The Committee of Union and Progress used the press as well as civil societies to create an agenda regarding the boycotts and mobilize society.

The boycotts spread across the empire, bringing together many different segments of society. Ranging from port workers to merchants and from officials to journalists, Ottoman citizens from all walks of life participated in them. People had a chance to express themselves through this social movement and create a strong sense of public opinion.<sup>80</sup>

The 1908 Ottoman Boycott quickly formed its own organizations, the Economic Warfare Society (*Harb-i İktisadi Cemiyeti*) and Boycott Society (*Boykotaj Cemiyeti*). The former was mostly a civil society that tried to spread the boycott movement to different parts of the empire as well as to different social groups whereas the latter was organized by merchants who refused to buy or import Austrian and Bulgarian goods.<sup>81</sup>

The Boycott Society tried several times to organize and mobilize merchants and the public around the boycott movement, and in doing so channel street rallies to a less dangerous arena. Since the leaders of the boycotts sought to involve merchants and port workers in order to make them more effective, those two occupations were usually targeted for action, particularly the latter.<sup>82</sup>

Newspapers, magazines, posters, meetings, conferences, and rallies made a significant impact in a short period of time and an effective boycott movement was launched against Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria. The boycott had a greater impact on Austria, which had more commercial ties to the Ottoman Empire than Bulgaria. The increasing cost of the boycott movement brought Austria to the negotiating table while strengthening the bargaining power of the Ottoman government.

As a result of negotiations between the Ottoman Empire and Austria, the latter agreed to pay 2.5 million Turkish pounds in remuneration for Bosnia-Herzegovina and signed the agreement on 26 February 1909. The negotiations with Bulgaria came to an impasse on account of remunerations, so Russia stepped in and suggested that the remainder of remunerations the Ottomans had to pay for the 1877-78 Russo-Ottoman War be counted as compensation for the

---

80 Y. Doğan Çetinkaya, 1908 *Osmanlı Boykotu: Bir Toplumsal Hareketin Analizi*, İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004, p. 35.

81 Ibid., p. 44.

82 Ibid., p. 317.

amount to be paid by the Bulgarians. The treaty signed on 23 April 1909 was approved by the Ottoman parliament, thus ending the crisis with Bulgaria.<sup>83</sup>

### 2.8.1.1. The Impact of the 1908 Boycott on Trabzon

The boycott was implemented quite effectively in Trabzon. Austro-Hungarian goods shipped down the Danube and across the Mediterranean and the Black Sea ended up in Trabzon, making up a large part of the commercial life of the city. Two telegrams that the governor Arifi Paşa sent to the Grand Vizier's Office offer the first clues about the boycott in Trabzon. In the first telegram, Arifi Paşa announced that the people of Trabzon were invited to a rally in Freedom Square by the Trabzon branch of Committee of Union and Progress because of a telegram sent by the headquarters of the Committee of Union and Progress in Salonika when the Bulgarian Principality and Austro-Hungarian Empire broke the conditions of the 1878 Berlin Treaty. He added that the governorship had taken all necessary measures to prevent any upheaval.<sup>84</sup> In the second telegram, he mentioned the peaceful rally where three thousand Muslims and non-Muslims gathered to express their united will to protect the rights of the Ottoman Empire. After the speeches of the Muslim, Greek, and Armenian representatives, telegrams of protest were sent to the Great Powers and the crowd dispersed without much tumult.<sup>85</sup>

The British consul also wrote a report about the rally. He stated that the speeches given at the rally, which was led by the *Müftü* and Customs Director Mehmet Emin Bey, purportedly also the leader of the Unionists, were translated into Armenian and Greek. He also mentioned that the committee led by the *Müftü* sent a telegram to all the states which had signed the 1878 Berlin Treaty protesting the current situation and demanding immediate intervention.<sup>86</sup>

The Trabzon branch of the Committee of Union and Progress summoned the merchants of Trabzon for a discussion of the annexation, again under the leadership of Trabzon Customs Director Mehmet Emin Bey, who had been given instructions to do so from headquarters in Salonika and Istanbul on 12 October 1908.<sup>87</sup> The meeting, which was held at Zağnos School, convened "for the protection of homeland and honour." It was decided that they would boycott goods from Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria, and they also decided to not allow cargo or passengers on Austrian ships. The *Hamiyet-i Milliye* Trade

---

83 Ibid., pp. 118-119.

84 BOA., A. MTZ. (04).171-47, 26 Eylül 1324 (9 October 1908).

85 BOA., A. MTZ. (04).171-47, 26 Eylül 1324 (9 October 1908).

86 PRO., F.O., 195/2303, 12 October 1908.

87 Kudret Emiroğlu, "Trabzon'da Avusturya Boykotu 1908", *Toplumsal Tarih*, No: 8, 1994, p. 17.

Committee was established to oversee the implementation of the boycott. The committee declared that starting on 28 October 1908 (15 Teşrînievvel 1324) cargo on such ships would not be unloaded.<sup>88</sup> After the meeting, they decided that merchants and middlemen would have to be civil in their correspondences to communicate their cancellations of previous orders and not sell their existing merchandise at high prices.<sup>89</sup> Eight Muslims and seven Armenians and Greeks served on the committee.<sup>90</sup>

An article in the 13<sup>th</sup> issue of *Trabzon'da Meşveret* stated that Bulgaria and Austria-Hungary had become concerned that the Ottoman Empire was flourishing instead of collapsing because of the efforts of the Unionists and was getting mobilized. The claim was made that through a comparison of the population size, land area, and trade relations of Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria with those of the Ottoman state, it became clear that the best response would be to declare “economic warfare” —in other words, boycott them.<sup>91</sup>

Discussing the independence of Bulgaria, the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Greece's attempted annexation of Crete, another article demanded that all Ottomans support their government in resisting those moves.<sup>92</sup> A telegram dealing with the same issue announced that all Turkish, Greek, and Armenian merchants in Trabzon had decided to boycott Bulgaria and Austria, and that all of the Turkish, Greek and Armenian merchants in Gümüşhane supported their decision.<sup>93</sup>

An article in the 18<sup>th</sup> issue of *Trabzon'da Meşveret* stated that the impact of the boycott against Austria-Hungary could already be seen, adding that Czechs now under the sovereignty of the Austrians rallied in Prague chanting, “We do not want Bosnia to be annexed!” and that there were similar protests in Hungary. It was also reported that Hungarian merchants demanded that a better ambassador be appointed to Istanbul as the Turkish boycott on Hungarian merchandise had brought trade to an almost complete standstill. *Trabzon'da Meşveret* interpreted this complaint in terms of the results of the boycott. Also, the newspaper stressed that products such as sugar and fez fabric, which were normally imported from Hungary, should be produced in Ottoman territories

---

88 “Hamîyet-i Millîye Ticaret Komisyonundan Varid olan İ'lan Suretidir”, *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 14, 4 Teşrînievvel 1324 (17 October 1908), p. 2.

89 Ibid., p. 2.

90 PRO., F.O., 195/2303, 15 October 1908.

91 M. Sadık, “Bulgaristan-Bosna Hersek: Nüfusu-Taksimât-ı Mülkiyeleri-İktisadî Harb”, *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 13, 1 Teşrînievvel 1324 (14 October 1908), pp. 2-3.

92 M. Sadık, “Osmanlılık Hayatı”, *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 16, 11 Teşrînievvel 1324 (24 October 1908), pp. 1-2.

93 “Suret”, *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 16, 11 Teşrînievvel 1324 (24 October 1908), p. 2.

by newly established local companies so that the Ottomans would not become dependent on Austro-Hungarian products again. The article in question even proposed setting up a factory in Trabzon to produce fake crocodile skin and pointed out that some merchants imported one thousand sacks of sugar from Marseille delivered on the ship *Pake*. However, merchants were warned not to take advantage of the situation for the sake of unethical profiteering.<sup>94</sup>

Lloyd, an Austrian company, reported that it had been unable to unload its cargo of sugar at the ports of Samsun, İnebolu, Trabzon, Ordu and others, even from Greek ships. It was said that customs officers and boatmen worked together to inspect the goods coming in so that they could determine their origin.<sup>95</sup> In another example, a Bulgarian ship carrying Bulgarian flour docked in Salonika but the boatmen and porters refused to take it ashore. In the end, the ship went to the port in Pirenne to transfer its cargo to a Greek ship. When that ship arrived in Salonika, the boatmen did not realize where it had come from and carried the goods ashore. However, during customs procedures, their origin was discovered and the porters refused to carry it to the shops, so it remained in the customs depot. The author of this article, which was published in *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, stated that since Bulgarian merchants were deceptive in their business dealings, there was no need to pity them when they suffered financial losses and offered a warning to others who might try to do business in similarly deceitful ways.<sup>96</sup>

Following a sugar shortage, *Trabzon'da Meşveret* stated in an article that just as France had managed to produce plant-based sugar when the country experienced a shortage of sugar, the Ottomans should follow suit. The author recommended that merchants from Trabzon, Samsun, Erzurum, Sivas, and Van come together to set up sugar factories instead of spending exorbitant amounts of money on importing sugar. In that way, it was argued, a staple like sugar could be produced independently.<sup>97</sup>

A meeting was held at Zağnos School to discuss possible solutions to the sugar shortage. During the meeting, a merchant from Trabzon announced that he would import *kırma* (cut) sugar from Marseille instead of Trieste and sell

---

94 “Harb-i İktisadinin Avusturyaya Te’siri”, *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 18, 18 Teşrînievvel 1324 (31 October 1908), p. 4.

95 Emiroğlu, *ibid.*, p. 17.

96 “Boykotaja Dair”, *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 22, 1 Teşrînisâni 1324 (14 November 1908), p. 4.

97 Salim, “Şeker Vesaire”, *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 23, 5 Teşrînisâni 1324 (18 November 1908), p. 1.



it at cost just to serve citizens' needs. His announcement was roundly praised by the participants of the meeting.<sup>98</sup>

However, an article in *Feyz* objected, calling that particular merchant a scoundrel. They said they investigated the situation and found out that merchants who claimed to sell sugar without making any profit would actually make at least 5 *kuruş* profit per kilo and thus monopolize the business on the basis of their claims since the other merchants at the meeting did not agree to the 'non-profit' sugar import scheme. Also, *Feyz* noted that it would be foolhardy to buy into the merchant's deception.<sup>99</sup>

Following the lead of *Feyz*, *Trabzon'da Meşveret* reported on the merchant in question and accused *Feyz* of misinforming the public, defending the merchant by publishing a copy of the invoice sent by the sugar supplier.<sup>100</sup> *Feyz* countered that its claims were indeed true,<sup>101</sup> so *Trabzon'da Meşveret* repeated that *Feyz* had misinformed and misled the public, claiming that their investigation had shed light on the issue.<sup>102</sup> Most likely, the merchant was in fact affiliated with the Unionists' Trabzon branch since *Trabzon'da Meşveret* had defended him.

An article published in the 28<sup>th</sup> issue of *Trabzon'da Meşveret* claimed that the boycott had started to take effect in Austria and should be maintained.<sup>103</sup> *Feyz* announced its appreciation of the boatmen's support for the boycott.<sup>104</sup> It was reported in *Trabzon'da Meşveret* that the people of Trabzon cared deeply about their homeland and honour, and that one evening over 300 people showed up at the Ottoman Club chanting "Long live the boycott!" They then expressed their satisfaction with the boycott against Austro-Hungarian and Bulgarian goods in an announcement made to the Committee.<sup>105</sup> Other articles dealing

---

98 "Marsilya Kıрма Şekeri", *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 20, 25 Teşrinievvel 1324 (7 November 1908), p. 4.

99 "Şeker Mes'alesi", *Feyz*, No: 28, 31 Teşrinievvel 1324 (13 November 1908), pp. 3-4.

100 "Şeker Mes'alesini Şeker Gibi Halledelim", *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 23, 5 Teşrinisâni 1324 (18 November 1908), p. 2.

101 "Meşveretin Şeker İtirazına", *Feyz*, No: 30, 7 Teşrinisâni 1324 (20 November 1908), pp. 3-4.

102 "Şeker İşi Şekerleşti", *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 25, 12 Teşrinisâni 1324 (25 November 1908), p. 4.

103 "Aman Sebat, Acısı Duyulmaya Başlamış", *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 28, 22 Teşrinisâni 1324 (7 December 1908), p. 1.

104 "Trabzon", *Feyz*, No: 38, 5 Kanûnievvel 1324 (18 December 1908), p. 4.

105 "Boykotaj ve Muhabbetperveran-ı Vatan", *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 31, 3 Kanûnievvel 1324 (16 December 1908), pp. 2-3.

with the issue mentioned that bargemen, porters, and boatmen had taken an oath to take the boycott to a new level.<sup>106</sup>

Despite the government's calls to end the boycott, the Unionists in Trabzon remained resolute, just like in Istanbul, and continued the boycott through the support of the dock workers. The Trabzon branch of the *German Levant Line* announced that the boycott in Trabzon was more effective than the one in Izmir and that during the month of November, no Austro-Hungarian goods were unloaded from their ships.<sup>107</sup>

On 3 December 1908, the Istanbul, Salonika, and Trabzon boycott committees decided that they would treat cargo from the Izmir Port as foreign merchandise if the workers there did not go along with the boycott. The same day, a porter who was specially hired to carry some Austro-Hungarian goods was attacked in Trabzon, and his load was burned on the street.<sup>108</sup> According to a report of the British consul in Trabzon dated 30 December 1908, on the previous day three bales of paper originating from Austria-Hungary were burned and twenty-five guns that had been made in Austria were destroyed in Freedom Square. The consul estimated the value of the destroyed property to be 100 lira.<sup>109</sup> *Trabzon'da Meşveret* reported on the incident from a rather different perspective, saying that it had been done to teach people who ignored the boycott a lesson. The newspaper reported that a group had marched with flags and pieces of broken Austrian guns on a platter around the market accompanied by a band and chants of "Teach them a lesson!" They then burned some paper from Austria in Freedom Square.<sup>110</sup>

In January 1909, the support of the merchants for the boycott had started to dwindle. The members of the last boycott committee included Mayor Nemlizade Cemal Bey, a lawyer, two merchants, a shipping agent, and two Turks. The group objected to the Customs Director's proposal to expand the boycott to include Lloyd ships. However, when the bargemen and the porters did not obey the committee's orders, the committee dissolved itself. From that point onwards, the boycott was run directly by the Unionists and implemented by their porters. In January and February, the boycott was still being strictly enforced.<sup>111</sup>

---

106 "Mavnacılar, Kayıkçılar ve Hamallar", *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 31, 3 Kanûnievvel 1324 (16 December 1908), p. 3.

107 Emiroğlu, *ibid.*, p. 18.

108 *Ibid.*, p. 18.

109 PRO., F.O., 195/2303, 30 December 1908, p. 296.

110 "Şehrimizde Boykotaj", *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 35, 17 Kanûnievvel 1324 (30 December 1908), p. 3.

111 Emiroğlu, *ibid.*, p. 18.

On the one hand, they were defying government orders to end the boycott, and on the other, they objected formally to news that the boycott had come to an end. In the 40<sup>th</sup> issue of *Trabzon'da Meşveret* it was said that some merchants had been informed of the termination of the boycott by telegrams that had actually been sent by Austrian shipping agencies and subjects. However, the newspaper administration soon discovered that an Austrian newspaper had announced that a settlement had been reached with Austria when the latter paid 2.5 million pounds for Bosnia-Herzegovina and that the rumour was based on that piece of news. However, the article insisted that the issue of Bosnia-Herzegovina had not yet been settled and that the boycott was continuing everywhere in full force.<sup>112</sup>

An article published in *Trabzon'da Meşveret* stated that thanks to the Ottoman boycott, the Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria crises would be solved more efficiently. It was reported that because European countries were afraid that a large war could ignite in Macedonia, they would favour finding a solution to the crisis.<sup>113</sup>

As regards news about a protocol between the Ottomans and Austria-Hungary, an article in the 53<sup>rd</sup> issue of *Feyz* stated it would not have any legitimacy unless approved by the Ottoman Parliament. The news story also questioned the cost of the settlement of the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina by Austria-Hungary. At the same time it stressed that the protocol would mean accepting that Bosnia-Herzegovina belonged to Austria, which would conflict with national interests.<sup>114</sup>

An announcement was made in the 59<sup>th</sup> issue of *Feyz* stating that the Ottomans settled the Bosnia-Herzegovina issue with Austria provided that the rights of the Muslims would be protected and that Austria would pay 2.5 million pounds in remuneration.<sup>115</sup> The following day, *Trabzon'da Meşveret* announced that the deal had been signed and the boycott needed to end.<sup>116</sup>

The Committee of Union and Progress managed to garner public support in Trabzon during the boycott. On 22 December 1910, American consul Milo wrote in a report that the influence of the governor, ambassadors, and

---

112 "Boykotaja Dair", *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 40, 7 Kanûnisâni 1324 (20 January 1909), p. 4.

113 M. Sadık, "Akibet Ne Olacak?", *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 43, 21 Kanûnisâni 1324 (3 February 1909), pp. 1-2.

114 Mehmed Halid, "Siyasiyyat: İtilaf Milli Değildir!", *Feyz*, No: 53, 27 Kanûnisâni 1324 (9 February 1909), pp. 1-2.

115 "Boykotaj Kalktı", *Feyz*, No: 59, 17 Şubat 1324 (2 March 1909), p. 4.

116 "Boykotun Lağvı Hakkındaki Telgrafname-i Sadaretpenahi", *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 51, 18 Şubat 1324 (3 March 1909), p. 3.

foreigners had dwindled and that the Committee of Union and Progress took complete control of the city through the support of porters and bargemen.<sup>117</sup>

### 2.8.2. The Greek Boycott in Trabzon

The Greeks in Crete, seeking to take advantage of the chaotic political situation after the proclamation of the Second Constitution, declared that the island was part of Greece. Crete had only symbolically been under Ottoman sovereignty since 1896 because of a century of revolts, massacres, and interventions by the Great Powers. However, the decision of the Cretan Parliament was not accepted by Greece as the result of pressure exerted by the Great Powers. The Ottomans asked the Great Powers to protect the internationally recognized status of Crete.<sup>118</sup>

When Muslim representatives in the Cretan Parliament were forced to pledge allegiance to the Greek King, they refused to do so, and they were therefore barred from parliament. This led to many protests in Ottoman society between 1909 and 1910, including a boycott on Greek merchandise and ships.<sup>119</sup>

Just as with the boycott against Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria, Trabzon became an important centre for the boycott. The Ottoman government tried to stop the boycott in order to avoid continuing international negotiations, but Trabzon implemented the boycott anyways, and it did so strictly. Trabzon Governor Arifi Paşa sent a telegram to the Ministry of the Interior stating that a Greek shipping company called Destoni had been boycotted first in Rize and then in Trabzon. Arifi Paşa asked for directives about what to do concerning the boycott even though it was only economic in nature. The Ministry of the Interior sent a directive to Trabzon and other provinces to prevent such actions.<sup>120</sup> Trabzon Governor Arifi Paşa sent another telegram to the Ministry of the Interior about a month later, stating that he tried to stop the boycott but all the boatmen in Trabzon, both Muslim and non-Muslim, declared that they would unload Greek ships for the following two weeks, but boycott all other Greek ships after that date, meaning that the ships that were already underway would be exempt. Also, merchants and passengers in Trabzon decided not to

---

117 Emiroğlu, *ibid.*, p. 18.

118 Melek Öksüz, "Girit Meselesinin Belirsizlik Yılları (1908-1913), *Karadeniz Araştırmaları*, Bahar 2010, No: 25, pp. 93-98; for further information, see: Pınar Şenışık, *The Transformation of Ottoman Crete: Revolts, Politics and Identity in the Late Nineteenth Century*, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2011.

119 Y. Doğan Çetinkaya, "Muslim Merchants and Working Class in Action: Nationalism, Social Mobilisation and Boycott Movement in the Ottoman Empire 1908-1914", [PhD Dissertation, Leiden: Leiden University, 2010], pp. 109-112.

120 BOA., DH. MKT., 2896-81, 1327. B. 24 (11 August 1909).

use Greek ships. The bargemen and boatmen followed the lead of their counterparts in Istanbul as the latter published a declaration in Turkish newspapers on 8 August 1908 (26 July 1325). Governor Arifi Paşa continued his telegram saying that using force would not be effective under the circumstances and asked for further directives from the Ministry of the Interior, who responded by saying that the Greek boycott would adversely affect international relations and the political efforts of the government, and for that reason should therefore immediately be put to an end.<sup>121</sup>

The 175<sup>th</sup> issue of *Trabzon'da Meşveret* contains an article about Crete stating that Christian representatives in the Cretan Parliament had pledged allegiance to the Greek King and demanded annexation of the island by Greece. The article goes on to say that there were plans for a rally in Trabzon a few days later where telegrams of protest were to be sent to the authorities.<sup>122</sup> In the following issue, it was reported that on 20 May 1910 (7 May 1326), a Friday, 10,000 people gathered in Freedom Square to express their willingness to defend Crete at any cost.<sup>123</sup>

An article published in *Trabzon'da Meşveret*'s 178<sup>th</sup> issue mentioned that the Greeks were persecuting Muslims on the island for the sake of the annexation of Crete. It also reported that the Greeks of Crete denied Muslim representatives access to parliament as the former had declared the island, which was under the protection of the Great Powers, to be part of Greece. The same news article stressed that the boycott would continue if Greece did not back out of Crete. Trabzon boatmen, who had proved their patriotism during the Bosnia-Herzegovina incident, declared that they would continue the boycott and establish a boycott committee to that end. The newspaper then called for a boycott on Greek goods.<sup>124</sup> In the following issue, a declaration concerning the boycott committee in Trabzon was published, stating that as of 14 May, Greek ships would not be allowed to dock at or pick up passengers from the Trabzon port and that Greek goods carried by other shipping companies would not be allowed onshore.<sup>125</sup>

The new Governor of Trabzon, Mustafa Bey, sent a telegram to the Ministry of the Interior in which he said that the boycott was continuing despite the directives of the latter, and both merchants and passengers were using

---

121 BOA., DH. MKT., 2901-35, 1327.B.28, (15 August 1909).

122 "Miting", *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 175, 5 Mayıs 1325 (18 May 1910), p. 3.

123 "Miting", *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 176, 8 Mayıs 1325 (21 May 1910), p. 1.

124 "Yunanistana Boykotaj", *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 178, 15 Mayıs 1326 (28 May 1910), p. 1.

125 "Boykotaj Komisyonundan", *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 179, 19 Mayıs 1326 (1 June 1910), p. 2.

non-Greek shipping companies. Mustafa Bey added that they continued to give the necessary advice.<sup>126</sup>

On the one hand, the boycott committee tried to expand the boycott in Trabzon, and on the other, it carried out propaganda activities full speed ahead. The former Minister of Finance, Mehmet Cavit Bey, and Ömer Naci Bey, who was a member of the Unionists' headquarters committee, talked about the Crete issue at a conference, stressing the importance of Crete for the Ottomans.<sup>127</sup> The 182<sup>nd</sup> issue of *Trabzon'da Meşveret* announced that a meeting had been held at the municipality, where they decided to create a volunteer brigade for the defence of Crete. Mayor Hacı Ahmet Efendi, Nemlizade Cemal Efendi, Murathanzade Ziya Bey, Kırzade Şevki, Hacı İbrahim Cudi, Hacısalihzade Servet, Hacıalihafizzade Hakkı, Şatırzade Mahmut, Haratmaszade Baki, Mercanyan Dikran, Karagözyan Ohannes, and Fosturopulo Yorgi Efendis established a committee in that regard.<sup>128</sup> The same issue of the newspaper reported that the volunteer brigade committee had met in the house of Murathanzade Ziya Bey to determine the necessary procedures for enlistment. They decided to organize a rally where they would enlist volunteers and accept donations. The committee was to give each volunteer and donor a document, and then hold such rallies in other places as well.<sup>129</sup>

An article was published in the 183<sup>rd</sup> issue of *Trabzon'da Meşveret* saying that Crete belonged to the Ottomans and that its annexation by Greece would never be allowed. It was stressed that any and all steps would be taken to ensure that Crete remained an Ottoman territory, including fighting to the death.<sup>130</sup> An article on the same page stated that another rally was held in Freedom Square for the sake of Crete and that a number of telegrams had been sent in that regard.<sup>131</sup> In addition to telegrams sent to the Office of the Grand Vizier and parliament, another was sent to Enver Bey, who at the time was stationed in Berlin as a military attaché, asking him to kindly lead the Volunteer Brigade of Trabzon.<sup>132</sup> In the next issue, it was reported that about 500 volunteers

---

126 BOA., DH. MÜ., 98.1-56, 1328. Ca. 26, (5 June 1910).

127 "Konferansın Esasları", *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 181, 26 Mayıs 1326 (8 June 1910), p. 1.

128 "Gönüllü Alayı Teşkili", *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 182, 29 Mayıs 1326 (11 June 1910), p. 1.

129 "Gönüllü Komisyonunun İştiğalatı", *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 182, 29 Mayıs 1326 (11 June 1910), p. 3.

130 M. Sadık, "Ya Girit, Ya Ölüm", *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 183, 2 Haziran 1326 (15 June 1326), p. 1.

131 "Miting ve Galeyan-ı Hamiyet", *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 183, 2 Haziran 1326 (15 June 1326), pp. 1-2.

132 "Gönüllü Cemiyeti Tarafından Çekilen Telgraflar", *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 183, 2 Haziran 1326 (15 June 1326), p. 2; "Berlin Ateşemiliteri Kahraman-ı Hürriyet Enver Bey'e", *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 183, 2 Haziran 1326 (15 June 1326), p. 2.

had carried out military exercises in Kavak Square accompanied by flags and students chanting the Homeland March. They marched as far as Tabakhane and returned through the marketplace.<sup>133</sup>

The 186<sup>th</sup> issue of *Trabzon'da Meşveret* contained an important piece of news about how the boycott committee had published a list of the names of Greek citizens in Trabzon whose shops were to be boycotted. The list included Kosti Kunduzi's Parişko Han, tailor İoniki's shop on Uzun Sokak next to the Catholic *Murahhasane*, Hotel Maranko, Hotel Soris, Dr. Metaksa, Dr. İspitoru's son, merchant Vasil Yuvanidi, haberdasher Karayanidi in Semerciler Bazaar, club owner Yanko Papadopulo in Çömlekçi, the Bank of Athens, Destoni shipping agent Diryand Efilidi, Nemse shop manager Leonidi Kunduzi, cobbler Josef Palikandriyoni's shop on Uzun Sokak, cobbler Poli Amor on Uzun Sokak, shipping commissioners Josef Livori and Givanni Palikari, cobbler Nikolaki Raemondo's shop adjacent to the Square, cafe owner Iraki's place in Çömlekçi, cafe and bar owner Yanko's place in Çömlekçi, and Messageries Maritimes policy agent Yorgi.<sup>134</sup>

*Trabzon'da Meşveret* reported that the boycott on Greek ships and goods was continuing in Istanbul and that the boycott committee distributed documents to merchants so that they could identify Greek shops to target. The article also mentioned that bars, restaurants, and shops belonging to Greeks in Galata had closed down because they weren't getting enough business.<sup>135</sup> Another issue of the same newspaper noted that the French Minister of Foreign Affairs sent a telegram to the French consul in Trabzon concerning the boycott on the Bank of Athens, stating that it was actually a French bank. Consequently, the boycott committee stopped the boycott against the bank to avoid straining friendly relations with France.<sup>136</sup>

A report prepared by the British consul in Trabzon dated 21 July 1910 included a list of the decisions that the Trabzon Boycott Committee had made thus far. It noted that the boycott on Greek goods was continuing in full force. The Boycott Committee banned the purchase and sale of Greek goods, travelling on Greek ships, and sending cargo via Greek shipping companies. The report stated that while Greek goods were not to be allowed ashore if delivered

---

133 "Gönüllüler", *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 184, 5 Haziran 1326 (18 June 1910), p. 3.

134 "Memleketimizdeki Yunanlıların Esamisi", *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 186, 12 Haziran 1326 (25 June 1910), p. 2.

135 "Boykotaj", *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 187, 17 Haziran 1326 (30 June 1910), p. 2.

136 "Boykotaj Komisyonundan", *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 189, 23 Haziran 1326 (6 July 1910), p. 2; Çetinkaya, *ibid.*, pp. 181-182.

by Greek ships, merchandise from other countries that were carried on Greek ships would be allowed ashore.<sup>137</sup>

In another article, *Trabzon'da Meşveret* announced that the boycott had taken on a new dimension. It was reported that Talat Bey, the Minister of the Interior, went to the Customs General Administration in Istanbul and spoke with Director Sırrı Bey as well as the local porters. As instructed, the porters promised they would only bring ashore Greek goods brought in by non-Greek ships as well as merchandise from other countries that arrived on Greek ships,<sup>138</sup> which gives the impression that the government was starting to back off the boycott in Istanbul.

The 207<sup>th</sup> issue of *Trabzon'da Meşveret* reported that the Greek consul went around the city to ask Greek merchants to compile reports concerning their losses caused by the boycott. The Greek consul purportedly said that he was going to ask the Ottoman government to compensate merchants for the losses they had suffered. Unimpressed by this show of words, *Trabzon'da Meşveret* said that the ambassador's efforts amounted to nothing more than a vain attempt to console Greek citizens and that they would come to nothing.<sup>139</sup> In the 201<sup>st</sup> issue of the same newspaper, it was reported that bargemen, porters, and coachmen gathered to protest Greece and step up the boycott by not unloading any merchandise from Greek ships or bring ashore Greek goods, regardless of which country the ship hailed from.<sup>140</sup> An article in the 221<sup>st</sup> issue reported that Venizelos, who had incited the armed rebellion of Cretan Christians, had been appointed prime minister of Greece. This was cited as evidence that Greek-Ottoman relations would not be normalized and the newspaper called for an escalation of the boycott on Greek goods.<sup>141</sup> The newspaper also reported that during a rally held in Freedom Square which was attended by four or five thousand people a call had been made to step up the boycott.<sup>142</sup>

During the course of the boycott a Greek ship flying under a Romanian flag sailed into the port but the boatmen and porters refused to unload her cargo, which led to a diplomatic crisis. The Romanian Ambassador in Istanbul asked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to solve the problem and take precautions

---

137 PRO., F.O., 195/2362, 21 July 1910, p. 72.

138 "Boykotaj", *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 197, 21 Temmuz 1326 (3 August 1910), p. 2.

139 "Boykotajdan Mutazarrır Olanlar ve Tazminat", *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 207, 25 Ağustos 1326 (7 September 1910), p. 1.

140 "Boykotaj", *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 210, 4 Eylül 1326 (17 September 1910), p. 3.

141 "Boykot Teşdid Edilmelidir", *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 221, 16 Teşrinievvel 1326 (29 October 1910), p. 1.

142 Naci, "Tezahürat-ı Milliyeden: Dünkü Miting", *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 281, 21 Mayıs 1327 (3 June 1911), p. 1.



to ensure that Romanian ships do not face the same treatment again. After the Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed the Ministry of the Interior about the situation, the latter asked the Trabzon province to report on the situation and take measures. Trabzon replied that the ship *Destoni* was in fact Greek, not Romanian, and that she was sailing under the Romanian flag as a ruse to deceive the boatmen and porters, who saw through the game and refused to unload her cargo.<sup>143</sup>

The 324<sup>th</sup> issue of *Trabzon'da Meşveret* reported that according to a statement signed by Yahya Kahya some foreign shipping companies claimed that boatmen overcharged passengers travelling on foreign ships when they boarded or disembarked and were rude, trying to force them to travel on Ottoman ships. Yahya commented that the boatmen would never engage in such behaviour and that passengers, in his words “as everyone knows,” preferred traveling on ships flying the Ottoman flag out of a sense of good intentions and patriotism. He added that while Greek ships were subject to the boycott, passengers who travelled on other foreign ships were treated the same as those who travelled on Ottoman ships.<sup>144</sup>

## Conclusion

Trabzon became a very important commercial centre as it was the gateway to Iran and Eastern Anatolia. Muslim merchants as well as their non-Muslim counterparts started to play an important role in international trade and became wealthy in the process. The increase in the volume of international trade revived the commercial life of the city, and as the number of embassies increased, foreign companies, shipping agencies, banks, and insurance companies took on an important role in the commercial life of the city as well.

The inhabitants of Trabzon closely followed any and all developments that had the potential to further revive the commercial life of the city. In particular, the issue of building a railway line that would connect Trabzon to the hinterland occupied public opinion for a long time. When the people of Trabzon realized that the railway project was stalling, they came together to put pressure on the government but the outbreak of the Balkan Wars, and later World War I, dashed their hopes for having a railway built. Another major issue in Trabzon was the port. Locals stated that a large port was needed that could accommodate large ships, but that never materialized either. The failure to realize the railway and

---

143 BOA., DH. SYS., 22-1.28, 17. Za. 1329 (9 November 1911).

144 İskele Kethüdası Yahya, “Beyanname”, *Trabzon'da Meşveret*, No: 324, 22 Temmuz 1327 (4 August 1911), p. 3.

port projects prevented Trabzon from making a major leap forward in terms of growing as a commercial centre.

The Unionists tried to encourage private enterprise and corporatization in Trabzon as well as across the country. They publicized such ideas, arguing that it was wrong to expect the state to do everything and that people needed to take the initiative. Indeed, a few companies were established thanks to the influence of such encouragement but in the end the desired outcomes could not be obtained. In addition, efforts were made to develop agriculture in Trabzon but because of the rugged geographical landscape and a lack of financial support, those efforts did not yield fruit either. The boycotts against Austria, Bulgaria, and Greece that were held between 1908 and 1909 had a large impact on the commercial life of the city. In an attempt to shore up the economy, the Committee of Union and Progress laid the foundations of the National Economy Policy and took action to boost economic growth.