

**Modern History Sourcebook:
Adam Neale:
The Romanian Principalities, 1818**

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The exhalations from the numerous marshes around Jassy, render the inhabitants very unhealthy, and cause annually a great mortality amongst them from the severe intermittent and remittent fevers of which they are the cause. At any time likewise when the plague has entered for example, in 1771, during the plague before alluded to, Moldavia, Jassy has been found to suffer most severely; the Russian garrison here lost a prodigious number of men, including the general in command, named Stoffeln, who by his foolish prejudices, over-ruled the precautionary measures which the army surgeons wished to enforce, and contributed to propagate the contagion more widely amongst his troops, 'till at length it was introduced into Poland and Russia, and reached Moscow, which capital it almost depopulated. Besides the calamities of pestilence, Jassy is subject from its locality to other ravages, arising from troops of hungry wolves, which pour down during the long winter nights from the forests of the adjoining mountains, and carry off the domestic animals, and sometimes even women and children. To repel these invaders, every family is provided with a brace or two of large wolf-dogs, which keep up during the night a terrific baying, and banish sleep from the eye-lids of visitors, unused to these canine watchmen. Those trusty guardians quite murdered by sleep during my stay, and made me often feel the force of the words of the Roman poet, "*vigilum canum tristes excubiae*;" for no sounds can be more melancholy than that of 10,000 or 12,000 wolf-dogs baying the moon at intervals all night, while the distant hamlets at the foot of the mountains re-echoed the sound. During the day-time, the clatter of the wooden mallets beating the tablets at the doors of the Greek churches, calling the people to prayers, the use of bells being prohibited in the Turkish provinces, produces a most disagreeable effect.

Russia has been gradually acquiring a domination over the provinces of Moldavia and Wallachia, by efforts which have been slowly but progressively renewed. She first obtained a right of interfering in their internal administration by the treaty of Kainargik in 1774, which granted the right of appointing consuls in any port or city in the Ottoman empire. In 1781, Russian residents were appointed at the courts of Jassy and Bukarest; and in 1802 by the influence of the Russian court, the Greek Prince Ipsilanti was promoted to the government of Wallachia, and Prince Mourousi to that of Moldavia, with the express condition that neither of them should be removed from their principalities, unless proved guilty of an offense which the Russian minister at Constantinople should deem sufficient to justify their deposal. Trusting to Russian protection, Prince Mourousi, at the time of our visit seemed to consider his government as a family fief, only to be terminated by his life, and was employed in erecting a stately palace in a commanding situation, which his son-in-law pointed out to our notice, with some exultation, as a token of the prosperity and permanency of the Mourousi dynasty. But how fallacious were these hopes. This family were not long permitted to enjoy their new residence; for after my return to England, I observed by the journals, that Prince Mourousi had died the death of most of his predecessors. It was on the 7th November 1812, that Prince Demetri Mourousi, ci-devant Hospodar of Wallachia, and one of the Ottoman plenipotentiaries at the Congress of Bukarest, who signed the treaty of peace with Russia, was decapitated at Schumla, the head-quarters of the grand vizier, agreeably to orders transmitted by the Grand Signor. We are generally assured that he suffered this catastrophe because it was known that he was a partisan of Russia. Such was the fate of Demetri

Mourousi, a fate which commonly terminates the lives of these faithless and intriguing men the Greek Hospodars.

After passing several years in dangling at the levees of the Turkish viziers, flattering lying, bribing, and undermining their rivals by malignant slanders, they become Court Dragomans, and afterwards succeed on vacancies to the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia. They set out for their seat of government loaded with debts, contracted in bribing the members of the Turkish divan, and surrounded by a host of needy relatives and hungry parasites, who are to be maintained and provided for by draining the peasantry of these devoted provinces. The most oppressive exactions are enforced, to wrest from these wretched peasants the wealth required to pay the Grand Seignor's revenue and keep the divan in good humour; and often on returning to the shores of the Bosphorus to enjoy their ill-acquired fortunes, the bowstring or scimitar puts a period to their career. Our kind host Prince Alexander Mourousi seemed an honourable exception to this character. He was about thirty years of age, had accompanied a Turkish embassy to Paris, was well informed, and seemed to have profited from his intercourse with the enlightened society of the French capital; was a kind husband, and the happy father of two promising children. The hospitality and attention which he showed towards Colonel Gillespie and myself, and the grateful sense he evinced of some professional attentions which I had it in my power to show him, were sufficient to prove to me that in his bosom existed a high feeling of gratitude which we often in vain look for in a more cultivated mind, and this induces me to speak of and to remember him with much esteem....

Source:

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halsall@murray.fordham.edu