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WILLIAM GEORGE WAGSTAFF – BRITISH CONSUL,
RESPONSIBLE FOR EKATERINOSLAV PROVINCE AND PORTS OF THE
SEA OF AZOV**

The article is devoted to the biography of one official representative of Great Britain in Ekaterinoslav province and ports of the Sea of Azov. Details of activities of William George Wagstaff have been studied on the base of archival materials and a wide range of English-language sources, including consular reports of Wagstaff to London.

Key words: consul, Great Britain, trade.

Стаття присвячена біографії одного з офіційних представників Великої Британії у Катеринославській губернії та у портах Азовського моря. Подробиці діяльності Вільяма Георга Вагстафа вивчені на підставі як архівних матеріалів, так і широкого комплексу англомовних джерел, включно із консульськими рапортами Вагстафа до Лондона.

Ключові слова: консул, Велика Британія, торгівля.

Статья посвящена биографии одного из официальных представителей Великобритании в Екатеринославской губернии и в портах Азовского моря. Подробности деятельности Вильяма Георга Вагстафа изучены на основании как архивных материалов, так и широкого комплекса англоязычных источников, включая консульские рапорты Вагстафа в Лондон.

Ключевые слова: консул, Великобритания, торговля.

For a long time all information about British Consuls in Berdyansk available to local researchers was limited to several mentions in the diaries of Vasily Kryzhanovskiy [7] and in publications of “Odesskiy Vestnik” [20; 23-25]. But recently, thanks to the international project “The Black Sea and its port-cities, 1774-1914. Development, convergence and linkages with the global economy”, we got a chance to make a real breakthrough in the study of biographies of British Consuls, who served not only in Berdyansk, but also in other cities of the region. One of them is William George Wagstaff, who was responsible for Ekaterinoslav province and ports of the Sea of Azov. Our article is dedicated exactly to the biography of this person.

William George Wagstaff was born in the family of William Wagstaff and Elizabeth, daughter of John Vaughan in Pembroke (November 3, 1837). Later William George Wagstaff studied at Greenwich Hospital School [18; 27]. On November 9, 1852 he entered the Royal Navy. Soon after, Wagstaff took part in the Crimean War, in particular, being on the ship “London” during the first bombardment of Sevastopol on October 17, 1854, which marked the beginning of the siege of the

city. For participation in the Crimean War William George Wagstaff received the British Crimean medal and clasps, as well as the Turkish medal [27]. From February of 1855 to August of 1856, Wagstaff was appointed clerk in the Admiral's office at Constantinople [18].

On April 1, 1861, when Robert William Cumberbatch remained in the position of the British Consul in Berdyansk, William George Wagstaff occupied the post of clerk in the local British Consulate. After staying one year with Cumberbatch in Berdyansk Wagstaff was sent to Rostov-on-Don "on special service" in September of 1862. William George Wagstaff was in charge of the British Consulate in Berdyansk after the departure of Cumberbatch, from June 7, 1864 [18] to October of 1865. It was Wagstaff who wrote reports from Berdyansk to London for 1863 (July 14, 1864) and 1864 (January 16, 1865). It is interesting that the report on the trade of Mariupol for 1863 was compiled in Berdyansk still by Cumberbatch (December 31, 1863), while the report on the trade of Mariupol for 1864 was written by Wagstaff (January 23, 1865). He also wrote in Berdyansk the report on the trade of Mariupol for 1865 (January 6, 1866), while the report directly on the trade of Berdyansk for the same year at the same day (January 6, 1866) was signed already by James Zohrab. It was Zohrab, not William George Wagstaff, who signed the Berdyansk reports of 1866-1874. But Wagstaff stayed in the city during this period [4]. From time to time he was the Acting Consul in Berdyansk, in particular, from May 15 to June 27, 1868 and from June 11 to August 9, 1874.

Correspondence of William George Wagstaff from Berdyansk for, particularly, 1864 [11], 1865 [12], 1869 [13], 1874 [14], 1875 [15], and 1876 [16] is preserved in the National Archives (the United Kingdom). Fragments of his reports from Berdyansk for 1863 and 1864 were given in the annexes to the article "Variation in the Price and Supply of Wheat" which was published in the "Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England" in 1869 [9]. In 1873 a quote from the report of Wagstaff about some of the most fertile soils in the South of the Russian Empire was published by "The London Quarterly Review" in the article "Exhaustion of the Soil of Great Britain" [10].

For the corresponding historical period it was very symptomatic that the British hero of the Crimean War, William George Wagstaff, had to look for the maintenance and development of trade in cooperation with the harbor master of Berdyansk, Prince Pavel Petrovich Maksutov, who participated in the battles for Sevastopol fighting for the Russian Empire.

When Wagstaff started his duties as the Acting Consul in Berdyansk, the protection of Ionian interests and the patronage of the Ionian colony were excluded from his jurisdiction [5]. This happened because the Ionian Islands, which had been under British protection since 1815, were solemnly transferred to Greece when the Treaty of London was signed in 1864.

Status of the British diplomatic representation in Berdyansk as well as of William George Wagstaff was changed in 1874. Exactly at this year the Chancellery of the Taurian governor formed the file "About the appointment of Wagstaff as the British Vice-Consul in Berdyansk" [1]. The study of this file allows us to better understand the official procedure that existed in the Russian Empire, and therefore in

the Southern Ukrainian lands, concerning candidates for diplomatic posts. Furthermore, the file provides details on the changes in status of Wagstaff and the British diplomatic representation in Berdyansk.

This file includes a letter written in French by the British Consul in Taganrog Carruthers to the Taurian governor, Major-General Alexander Kavelin, dated September 24 (October 6), 1874. Carruthers informed that the British government decided to transform the Consulate in Berdyansk into a Vice-Consulate, which should depend on the British Consul in Taganrog. So on September 22, 1874 the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Edward Stanley, 15th Earl of Derby ordered to appoint William George Wagstaff to the new position of Vice-Consul in Berdyansk. Therefore, Carruthers expressed hope that the Taurian governor would recognize the appointment and help Wagstaff while performing his official duties.

Nonetheless, official approval of the central power of the Russian Empire was needed. For this reason, the British Ambassador in Petersburg requested to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs the approval of Wagstaff. The next step was dated November 7, 1874 with the appeal of the Department of Internal Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Empire to the Taurian governor to request information on any obstacle to the appointment of Wagstaff (the surname of William George here was written as "Wagstoff").

On November 27, 1874 the authorities of Taurian province appealed to the harbor master of Berdyansk for his opinion regarding the case. Already on December 3 the harbor master wrote a report addressed to the Taurian governor, where he informed that William George Wagstaff had been living in Berdyansk for 12 years, where he was widely respected; so there were no obstacles to his appointment. The report about the absence of obstacles was sent from the Chancellery of the Taurian governor to the Department of Internal Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on December 20, 1874.

By January 10, 1875 the Governing Senate wrote to the Taurian governor that on January 4 the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs informed that the Emperor had ordered to recognize Wagstaff as the British Vice-Consul in Berdyansk. Therefore, the Governing Senate ordered to the provincial government to recognize William George Wagstaff and to give him, if necessary, "assistance and justice". On January 26, 1875 the governor, reporting the content of the corresponding decree to the Taurian provincial government, ordered to publish it in the official provincial press.

After this appointment, the reports from Berdyansk for 1874 (February 1, 1875) and 1875 (February 28, 1876), like almost ten years before, were signed by William George Wagstaff. The last of these reports also included data on Mariupol.

Newspapers recorded several festive events in Berdyansk, in which, with a high degree of probability, William George Wagstaff took part. In particular, in September of 1875 all foreign diplomats in Berdyansk were invited to a dinner hosted by the local community on the occasion of a visit of the Minister of Education, Dmitry Andreyevich Tolstoy [22]. On May 20, 1876 Consuls were mentioned among those who solemnly escorted Pavel Petrovich Maksutov to the steamer when he left Berdyansk, being appointed as a Taganrog governor of the town [21].

However, in the same 1876 Wagstaff himself was transferred from Berdyansk to the position of Vice-Consul in Nikolaev [2]. There, Wagstaff detailed the characteristics of Jews in the Russian Empire, work that aroused interest of ordinary readers and provoked lively discussions among researchers. When Wagstaff served in Nikolaev, the Chancellery of the Nikolaev military governor formed “The file about the issue of the certificate about 9 British steamers frozen in an estuary for the British Vice-Consul in Nikolaev William George Wagstaff” (1880) [3]. Interestingly, the documents of this file, which we received in copies from the Director of the State Archive of Mykolaiv region, Larisa Levchenko, included two autographs of the British Vice-Consul. Both autographs were written in Russian: “В.Г. Вагстаф”.

In 1884 William George Wagstaff moved from Nikolayev to Taganrog, where, as the British Consul, he was responsible for Ekaterinoslav province and ports of the Sea of Azov (while the Vice-Consul in Berdyansk also sent him reports). From 1887, Wagstaff was also responsible for the provinces of Voronezh, Saratov, Samara, Ufa, Orenburg, Astrakhan, Stavropol, Oblast’ of the Don Cossack Host, Kuban and Terek oblast’ [27]. In 1889 Wagstaff was transferred to Riga, where he was responsible for the governorates of Livonia and Courland. On April 1, 1895 [17] the Queen appointed Wagstaff to the post of Consul General in Rio de Janeiro [8]. In 1897 he received the Jubilee medal. The next year William George Wagstaff received the Order of St. Michael and St. George. In 1899 he became Consul General for the Brazilian states of Rio de Janeiro, Espirito Santo, Minas Gerais, and Mato Grosso. In August of 1900 Wagstaff retired and later lived under the address of Belmont, De Roos Road, Eastbourne.

Regarding the personal life of William George Wagstaff, in 1874 he married Marie Louise, a daughter of Georges Nein from Fribourg (Switzerland). She died in 1883. Later, Wagstaff remarried Sarah Amelia who previously was the wife of William Brenan (Odessa) [27; 28]. William George Wagstaff had three daughters. It is interesting that in a list of sales of an auction in Paris for April 30, 2014 there is a portrait “of the English Vice-Consul William George Wagstaff and his wife dates from May 4, 1877” (Nikolaev) [6].

William George Wagstaff died on May 12, 1918 [26].

Some reports of William George Wagstaff we have published in the book “European Vector of the Northern Azov in the Imperial Period: British Consular Reports about Italian Shipping” [19]. Much more detailed information about Wagstaff could be found in our book “From Cumberbatch to Greaves: British Consuls in Berdyansk”, forthcoming.

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