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**FOREIGN TRADE THROUGH THE PORT CITY OF MARIUPOL BASED ON THE REPORTS OF BRITISH CONSULS 1858-1864**

The city of Mariupol played an important role in the development of foreign trade between the Azov region and European countries in the 19th century. Strategically important products and goods in high demand in European markets were exported through the city's seaport. The United Kingdom, along with other countries such as Austria, the Kingdom of Sardinia (later the Kingdom of Italy) and others, considered Mariupol to be an important port city.

Information on the inclusion of Mariupol in the network of British consular offices is available in “Accounts and Papers. 1857-1858”, the source states that there was a consular representative in the rank of clerk who had a salary of £150 for 1858-1859 [1, с. 19]. In the same year, the first report on the development of trade in Mariupol during 1858 was published by Robert William Cumberbatch, who served as British Consul in Berdyansk. According to the report, the port of Mariupol was a third-class port, it was used only to export goods, and so imported goods were not delivered to the city. The consul described the port as inconvenient, due to the inability of ships to come directly to the shore to load vessels. Ships would anchor three miles offshore and wait to be loaded. To get the goods on board, they were first placed into small lighters, and conveyed to larger lighters or small vessels, and finally placed on board the vessels. Until 1858, small lighters were not used for loading goods, as small vessels would enter the mouth of the Kalmius River, load up and then deliver the goods directly to the ships. In 1858, this was no longer possible because the river mouth was gradually becoming blocked up. This system of loading ships significantly increased the cost of shipping and the value of goods [2, с. 43].

Robert William Cumberbatch provided statistics on the number of ships that arrived at the port of Mariupol in 1858 and compared these data with the two previous years (see Table 1). In 1862, Mariupol and the surrounding area experienced a drought, with many crops dying, which negatively affected the quantity and quality of the grain harvest. This led to a decline in export trade through the Mariupol port. As a result, in 1863 grain prices rose significantly, as British Consul R. W. Cumberbatch emphasised: “...the prices were too high to leave any prospect of a profit upon shipments” [4, с. 271]. Despite a significant decline in the total number of vessels from 179 in 1862 to 106 in 1863, the number of British ships remained unchanged (see Table 1).

The total number of ships flying the British flag gradually increased from 1858 to 1864, which, according to Acting Consul William George Wagstaff, was to continue, “…as commercial houses trading with Great Britain find it often more remunerative to transact business at Marianopol than at either Taganrog or Berdiansk” [5, с. 19]. The positive outlook was also influenced by the expectation of a change in the status of the Mariupol custom-house from the third class that allowed importing goods that are exempt from duty to a second class custom-house as the Minister of Finance had indicated. According to the consul, such changes would undoubtedly have a positive impact on the development of trade in Mariupol and the role of the port among other ports of the Azov Sea.

The largest number of vessels that arrived in Mariupol sailed under the flags of Sardinia, Austria, Great Britain, Greece, and in much smaller numbers from the Ionian Islands, Naples, Norway, France, Belgium, Prussia, etc. The main export commodities in the late 50s were wheat, linseed, barley. Much less oats, tallow and red caviar were exported compared to the above mentioned goods. In 1861 and 1864, the list of exported goods increased significantly. As in previous years, wheat and linseed were the top exports, followed by oats, rapeseed and barley. Tallow, caviar, wool, butter and hides were also transported through the port of Mariupol [5, с. 20]. The expansion of the list of goods was taking place against the backdrop of an increase in sales and the number of ships arriving at the port.

Table 1. Total number of vessels arrived at Mariupol port from 1856-1864

[2, р. 43; 3, р. 345; 4, р. 271; 5, р. 19-20].

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Year | Total number of vessels | British vessels | Tonnage | Exports in £ |
| 1856 | 193 | no information | 60,050 | 555,471 |
| 1857 | 97 | no information | 30,006 | 226,444 |
| 1858 | 127 | 10 | 41,696 | 354,529 |
| 1859 | 175 | 11 | 51,137 | 427,286 |
| 1860 | 170 | 11 | 54,036 | 612,113 |
| 1861 | 215 | 14 | 66,157 | 752,241 |
| 1862 | 179 | 12 | 52,611 | 511,336 |
| 1863 | 106 | 12 | 30,095 | 321,328 |
| 1864 | 187 | 14 | 51,556 | 535,594 |

Therefore, the reports of the British consuls show that the empire was interested in expanding foreign trade through the port of Mariupol. Despite the inconveniences faced by vessels when loading goods, foreign trade continued to develop, and the prospects of opening a second-class custom-house with permission to import goods to Mariupol gave hope for an increase in both export and import trade through the port of Mariupol.

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