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SIR HENRY BULWER
AND THE WALLACHIAN ELECTIONS OF 1857*

The elections of the Divans in Wallachia and Moldavia in 1857 were the prelude to their unification two years later. Representatives of the countries involved in the Crimean War and the European powers who had remained neutral but had an interest in the future of the Danubian Principalities, had met in Paris to formulate a peace treaty. It had been one of the conditions of peace that the overlordship of Russia should be terminated and the status of the Principalities regulated by the Ottoman Porte under the collective guarantee of Austria, France, Great Britain, Russia and Turkey¹. No decision was taken at the Congress of Paris on the divisive question of union. Instead, under article twenty-three of the treaty (23 July, 1856), the issue was shelved until a commission of the great powers could meet in Bucharest to evaluate the local situation and consult the Divans to be freely elected and representative of all classes in the Principalities². The conflicting national interests represented by this body of commissioners soon made the exclusively consultative nature of their mission an illusion. Moldavia provided the most fruitful field for interference, and so notoriously corrupt were the elections of 19 July, 1857, that international pressure was organised by France to force the Porte to annul the results and hold new elections in September. The gravity of the situation was discussed during the visit of the Emperor Napoleon III to Queen Victoria at Osborne in August, 1857, and their ministers reached vague accord on the steps to be taken³.

British policy towards unification was conditioned by the more general aim of preserving the Ottoman Empire from the ambitions of its enemies, an aim which, after all, had led Britain into the Crimean War. This meant that whilst the British government recognised the need for improvements in the way the

* I gratefully acknowledge the permission of the Earl of Clarendon and the Trustees of the Bodleian Library of the University of Oxford to reproduce extracts from the Clarendon Papers.

1. W. G. East, *The Union of Moldavia and Wallachia, 1859: An Episode in Diplomatic History*, Cambridge: The University Press, 1929, p. 26.

2. Sarah Wambaugh, *A Monograph on Plebescites, with a Collection of Official Documents...*, New York: Publications of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1920, p. 746. See also: H. W. V. Temperley, «The Treaty of Paris and its execution», *Journal of Modern History*, vol. VI, December 1932, pp. 531-541.

3. W. G. East, «The Osborne Conference and the Memorandum of August, 1857», *English Historical Review*, vol. XLIII, July 1928, pp. 409-412.

Principalities were governed, it was not contemplated that this would necessitate radical changes. As Professor East has pointed out, «it is incorrect to maintain that Great Britain opposed Napoleon's unionist policy at the Congress [of Paris] and caused its defeat... The fact is that Clarendon had no strong views on the future of the Principalities in general or on the question of union in particular»¹. Such lack of precision on the part of the British government left considerable scope to its representatives on the spot: Sir Henry Bulwer, and, more particularly, to the dominant personality of Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, the turcophile British ambassador at Constantinople.

Bulwer had received his instructions from Lord Clarendon, the Foreign Secretary, in July 1856². He was ordered to proceed to the Principalities and report on the prevailing wishes of the Divans as well as on all matters of internal administration, about which the British government had «no preconceived opinion». Not until later was he informed that it was unnecessary for him to conceal British opposition towards union, whilst at the same time being urged to maintain the strictest impartiality in carrying out his duties³. The choice of Sir Henry Bulwer as British commissioner in the Principalities was not an altogether happy one:

Accustomed by virtue of his talents and experience to a position of responsibility, he chafed under the secondary role he was called upon to play, and continually complained to Clarendon... that he was being slighted by Stratford. An open quarrel at Constantinople before all the ambassadors and an acrimonious correspondence reflected little credit on either diplomat ...With all due regard for Sir Henry's 'disordered liver', one is forced to the conclusion that it was Stratford's arrogant egoism that prevented that unity of spirit and action [in British policy] which so noticeably characterized French diplomacy in the Near East⁴.

Bulwer's «nombreuses maladies» during his residence in the Principalities⁵, and the antipathy between himself and the ambassador, did little to clarify the muddled thinking of the British government on the question of union. So detached a view of events in the Principalities did Bulwer take, that when most of his fellow commissioners were setting out on a tour of inspection in Moldavia, he decided to stay behind at Bucharest⁶. Three weeks before the new elections

1. W. G. East, *The Union of Moldavia and Wallachia...*, pp. 49-50.

2. *Clarendon to Stratford, London, 23 July 1856*, The Public Record Office, London, F.O. 195/506.

3. W. G. East, *The Union of Moldavia and Wallachia...*, p. 87.

4. T. W. Riker, «The Concert of Europe and Moldavia in 1857», *English Historical Review*, vol. XLII, April 1927, pp. 236-237.

5. Juliette Decreus, *Henry Bulwer-Lytton et Hortense Allart d'après des documents inédits*, Paris, M. J. Minard, 1961, p. 131.

6. *Bulwer to Clarendon, Bucharest, 23 May 1857*, The Public Record Office, London, F. O. 78/1239.

were to take place in Moldavia Bulwer took a steamer up the Danube to Orsova «for a little fresh air», and reported to his friend that if nothing urgent arose he intended to «go round the monasteries in Little Wallachia which one ought to know something about, as they are one of the general sources of abuse on one side and reverence on the other»¹. He had taken this trip up river with the sister of Nicholas Vogorides. It was from her that Bulwer gathered the information that the forthcoming elections in Moldavia were «not likely to take place so soon as 15 days and that the French Consul had altered his tone and conduct so that it was just possible the new Elections might be anti-Unionist tho' the contrary seems the prevailing belief»². In fact there was little chance of an anti-unionist victory in Moldavia, and when the results were declared later in September, 1857, sixty-six self-proclaimed unionists were returned out of a total of eighty-seven³.

The date of the Wallachian elections had been postponed on a technicality, although it seems unlikely that the magnitude of the unionist victory in Moldavia had any significant impact on the result. The National Party had long held the ascendancy, and Bulwer had privately admitted to Lord Clarendon on 4 September 1857: «We must acknowledge to ourselves that almost every man in this Principality is, or says he is, for uniting the two under a foreign Prince»⁴. Public opinion in Wallachia had been allowed greater freedom of expression than in Moldavia, and the result was a foregone conclusion. Instead of speculating on a cause already won, interest focussed on the factional infighting between supporters of the rival Ghika and Stirbey-Bibesco groups. Bulwer tried to crystallize Wallachian sentiment in the following rather facile manner:

...I think however that I have mentioned to you all along that the real Union feeling is a feeling in favour of a Foreign Prince, partly from rival jealousies, partly from a hope in this way to get greater independence, partly from an idea that such a choice might lead to internal improvement, but especially from a belief that a Foreign Prince would bring decorations and titles and a court. The permanent success of the project I greatly doubt of; the momentary popularity even with 2 Foreign Princes would certainly be great — to the Porte such a scheme however would surely be obnoxious.

I will try and ripen some plan as affairs progress on the basis of the Osborne agreement and to that, since it was agreed to, I would stick⁵.

1. *Bulwer to Ponsonby, Orsova, 31 August 1857 (Private)*, The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, MS. Clarendon, dep. c. 72, fol. 282.

2. *Ibid.*, fols. 282-283.

3. R. W. Seton-Watson, *A History of the Roumanians*, Cambridge, the University Press, 1934, p. 259.

4. T. W. Riker, *The Making of Roumania: A Study of an International Problem, 1856-1866*, Oxford, the University Press, 1931, pp. 144-145.

5. *Bulwer to Clarendon, Orsova, 4 September 1857*, The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, MS. Clarendon, dep. c. 72, fol. 286.

Whatever influence Bulwer might have liked to have exerted on the Wallachians, he probably realised it would have been counter-productive. Instead he proved an informed, if rather passive, bystander to the momentous events then shaping the destiny of the Danubian Principalities. When the results were finally known he had his secretary, Henry Stanley, write up the account of the elected deputies of «the great boyar class», a document which provides an illuminating insight into British views of the personalities involved in Romania's struggle for nationhood.

Bukarest, October 3. 1857

My dear Spencer,

Sir Henry desired me, in his absence, to send the result of the Wallachian elections in a private letter.

The result has been that more men of position, rank or property, have been elected, than had been anticipated by some. The most capable men however have not been returned, and excepting the ultras, most of the deputies are almost exclusively partizans either of Pce Ghika, or of Pces Stirbey and Bibesco: chiefly the first: and will probably follow the lead of those heads of party. At Craiova where Stirbey and Bibesco were elected, the Prefect M. Valiano, an ultra or man of '48, as they name those who took part in the movement of 1848, resorted it is said, to an ingenious electioneering device; during the voting he caused some hay to be fired in different parts of the town, and of course a cry of fire was raised: his secret however was not kept, and the voters saw through the trick, and said: never mind, let our houses burn, but let us finish the business we are about: which they did accordingly.

For the district of Ilfov (Bukarest) I. Mano was elected president and MM. Foka & Catarjy secretaries to preside over the elections. These three are of the opposition or Stirbey-Bibesco party; but I heard it said, they were chosen to preside, in order to keep them to their seats, and prevent their walking about the room, & influencing the electors.

In Ilfov Pce Gregoire Ghika obtained 45 votes, his brother Mitika Ghika 44, Pce Stirbey 23, I. Mano 18, and C. Boliak 12, there were some other candidates. Pce Mitika Ghika says he was opposed by Govnt (and he probably was unsupported, since he has pretensions rivalling those of the Kaimakam), and that Boliak was the other Govnt Candidate. It is difficult to say why, as he is very ultra, and has not a good reputation, being mixed up in the making away with of the jewels of the Zichy family during the Hungarian revolution.

The members of the present Divan have with the exceptions of Pce Stirbey, Pce Bibesco, M. Oteteleshano, and Pce Dimitri or Mitika Ghika, signed the programme of the four points, and many have accepted the «mandat impératif» cons-

tituting them delegates, pledged to ask for the 4 points and nothing else, and without power to entertain any other questions without fresh reference to their constituencies. If the object of the Treaty was to obtain the opinions of the country on the reorganization of the constitution and legislation of the country: that object will not be well attained through the present Divan, for the great majority of the deputies are men little known, and rather insignificant and incapable than otherwise, and will not be able to do much more than deliver their mandate. C. Brai-loi, I. Filipescu, Fredikides, the first legists of the country; Arsaki, Barbu Bellio, I. Slatiniano, and Catarjy, all capable, and well known men have to failed to enter the Divan. The Comité Central has chiefly directed the choice of the elections: in the elections for Bukarest the four candidates put forward by them have been carried; just before the elections, the Govt which had previously been going along with the Club, took a different line, and instead of Ivranu & Kul-oglu, tried to bring in Costaforo & Bozniano. Costaforo writes in the Seculu, and is one of the most violent writers here.

I am told that many of the deputies returned by the peasant class are the same men, that in 1848 were named one for each district to act in a Commission, together with an equal number of proprietors, for inquiring into the laws relating to labour.

I inclose a list of the deputies of the great proprietors, with a description of them: the names of all the deputies of the other classes are not yet known. Among the townspeople Dimitri Bratiano whom you saw at Paris in '56 has been elected; Bukarest has returned, Nicolas Golescu an exile of '48. K.A. Rosetti an exile of '48 and Ivranu, two newspaper writers: and M. Kuloglu a merchant, who was selected because it was wished to have one deputy a merchant, and this one had assiduously attended the meetings of the Central Club. Altogether 19 men of '48 have been elected.

Yours sincerely,

[signed] H. Stanley

P.S. Monday October 5

The elections have not been by any means free from Govt pressure. Yesterday the prefect of Craiova arbitrarily arrested, and sent up under escort to Bukarest three proprietors for having opposed the illegalities of the prefect.

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Annexe

The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, MS. Clarendon, dep. c. 72, fols. 314-319.

«LIST OF DEPUTIES OF THE CLASS OF GREAT BOYARS OF WALLACHIA WITH DESCRIPTION»

| | Great Proprietors | Saturday 27th. Sepr. |
|------------------------------------|--|---|
| <i>Ilfov</i> Bukarest | p ^{ce} Gregoire Ghika P ^{ce} Mitika Ghika | insignificant ex Agha or Chief of Police — moderate — very ambitious |
| <i>Vlashka</i> (Giurgevo) | Manuel Lakhovary Nicolas Tatarano | Conservative (friend of Stirbey) under the influence of M. Arsaki Moderate |
| <i>Prahova</i> (Ployeshti) | Const. Filipesco Jean Cantacuzene | Moderate (Stirbey) not honest Moderate (Ghika) under influence of his fa- ther in law Mavros |
| <i>Dumbovitzza</i> (Tirgovisht) | Eugene Predesco Const. Costiesco | ardent unionist approved of by the Seculu insignificant (brother in law of P ^{ce} Costaki Ghika) |
| <i>Buzeo</i> | Nicolas Pikleano Charles Voinesco | men of the Central Club (Ghika) |
| Rimnik Sereth | M. Marguilloman Const. Robescu | ultra brother of the prefect of Buzec insigni- ficant |
| Ibrail | Const. Cretzulesco Greg. Filipesco | Editor of Concordia, President of the Central Club moderate |
| Yalonitza | Jean Rosetti Alex ^r Floresco | (Ghika) (Bibesco-Stirbey) conservative |
| Argish (Piteshti) | Ion Bratiano Burky | Republican mixed up with Mazzini (Bibesco-Stirbey) conservative |

| | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| <i>Mushtchel</i> (Campolungu) | Stephen Golesco Nicolas Bukarianu | ultra — man of 1848 |
| <i>Olto</i> (Slatina) | Ion Salomon Const. Valiano | father of the prefect of Olto cousin of prefect of Craiova |
| <i>Mehedintzi</i> | Inptcheano Mikulesco | insignificant, not previously known |
| <i>Doljin</i> (Craiova) | Pee Stirbey Pee Bibesco | |
| <i>Vultcha</i> (Rimnik) | Oteteleshano N. Lahovary | Cons. (Bibesco-Stirbey) (Ghika) |
| <i>Gorjiu</i> | Broshitano Maghero | (Stirbey) Calls himself General, absolutely illiterate, very ambitious — professes to be a patriot — exile of 1848 |
| <i>Teleorman</i> (Turnu) | Boutculesco E. Lapati | insignificant brother of prefect of Ploieshti |
| <i>Romanatzi</i> (Karakal) | Col. Vladoianu Faniko Tsiano | brother of present chief of the militia ad interim |