

## THE SELECTION OF PRINCE GEORGE OF GREECE AS HIGH COMMISSIONER IN CRETE

On December 21, 1898, Prince George of Greece, second son of King George I of the Hellenes, set foot on Crete as the island's new ruler. The Christian majority of the islanders hailed him as a symbol of the end of centuries of foreign domination. That a Greek prince could thus gain control of part of the Ottoman Empire less than two years after Greece had been defeated decisively by the Turks in battle was a remarkable indication of how the dynastic connections of the Greek royal family could help influence the decisions of the Great Powers. George's installation as High Commissioner in Crete can be traced directly to the perseverance of highly-placed relatives of his who wanted him in that post.

Prince George's name first became linked with Crete in February 1897. The island was then undergoing the latest of a long series of rebellions by the Greek Orthodox majority against the Ottoman Empire. In Greece a chauvinist, nationalist organization, the *Ethnike Hetairia*, whose avowed purpose was to liberate all Greeks ruled by the Ottoman Empire, was stirring up the public and calling upon the government to aid the Cretan Christians in bringing about union with Greece. The Greek government, already facing a serious financial crisis, had largely resisted these pressures until February 4 when Cretan Moslems rioted and burned the Christian quarter of Canea, one of the island's most important cities. In response to this, Greece dispatched two warships to Canea on February 7 to remove Greek subjects and aid any refugees. A few days later, the government sent more vessels, including a torpedo-boat flotilla under the command of Prince George. On February 12 he reached Canea Bay, where the six Great Powers—France, Great Britain, Austria-Hungary, Germany, Russia, and Italy—had already stationed naval detachments in an effort to maintain peace. The Powers' admirals let the prince know that his presence there was unwise; and he sailed away the next day.<sup>1</sup>

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1. William L. Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism, 1890-1902* (2nd ed.; New York, 1951), pp. 355-358; Alexandros Mazarakes-Ainianos, *Historikē Meletē*, 1821-1897, kai

Why had Prince George undertaken this ineffectual expedition? The answer is still unclear. In his memoirs, written many years later, the prince affirmed that he went to Crete to stop the disembarkation of Turkish troops.<sup>2</sup> But this does not explain why a member of the Greek royal family was chosen to do this. Most probably the reason was connected with the internal agitation in Greece. The Ethnike Hetairia's propaganda was strongly questioning the patriotism of the prince's father, King George I, by saying that he had not worked sufficiently in the past for the territorial expansion of Greece. This was a particularly serious criticism for the king to meet. Chosen to be King of the Hellenes in 1863 when he was a Danish prince, King George had worked successfully to identify himself and his family with the Greek nation. A questioning of his patriotism at this point reflected not only on him but also on the future of the entire dynasty, so newly rooted in the country. Hence, the king needed to make a dramatic show that he was at one with his people in wishing to help the Cretan Christians. How better a way than by sending his son off to Crete?

The intervention of the Powers, however, prevented the prince from doing anything; and the king, who had won some acclaim when his son first sailed off, now found himself again in a position where he had to proceed boldly lest doubts be cast on his desire to help the Cretans. Under these circumstances he gave his consent to the dispatch of a Greek force of fifteen hundred men to Crete on February 13. Their commander, Colonel Timoleon Vassos,

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*ho Polemos tou* 1897. *Meta Parartematos*, 1898-1903 [Historical Study, 1821-1897, and the War of 1897. With an Addition, 1898-1903] (2 vols.; Athens, 1950), I, 273-277; William Miller, *The Ottoman Empire and its Successors, 1801-1927, with an Appendix, 1927-1936* (4th ed.; Cambridge, Eng., 1936), p. 434; Édouard Driault and Michel Lhéritier, *Histoire diplomatique de la Grèce de 1821 à nos jours* (5 vols.; Paris, 1925-1926), IV, 338-348; France, Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, *Documents diplomatiques: Affaires d'Orient, Affaire de Crète, Conflit gréco-turc, Situation de l'Empire ottoman, février-mai 1897* (Paris, 1897), nos. 11, 64, 71-73, 76, 130; *The Times* (London), February 6, 1897, p. 7, February 8, 1897, p. 5, February 10, 1897, p. 5, February 11, 1897, p. 5, February 12, 1897, p. 5; H.R.H. Prince George of Greece, *The Cretan Drama: The Life and Memoirs of Prince George of Greece, High Commissioner in Crete* (1898-1906), ed. A.A. Pallis (New York, 1959), pp. 9-10; Great Britain, *Parliamentary Papers, Turkey No. 9* (1897): *Report on the Situation in Crete* (London, 1897), no. 1; Great Britain, *Parliamentary Papers, Turkey No. 10* (1897): *Further Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of Crete* (London, 1897), no. 113; France, Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, *Documents diplomatiques français, 1871-1914* (41 vols.; Paris, 1929-1959), Series I, XIII, nos. 103, 107. The latter work is hereafter cited as DDF.

2. Prince George, *Cretan Drama*, pp. 9-10. Cf. with the comments on why the prince undertook the expedition in *The Times* (London), February 12, 1897, p. 5.

was given instructions to "occupy the island, driving away the Turks from the forts, and taking possession of them."<sup>3</sup>

The Powers, still anxious to prevent war between Greece and the Ottoman Empire, moved swiftly to counteract the effect of the Greek occupation. They decided that they ought to place the island into a kind of trust until the issues at hand could be settled; and on February 15 they landed about fourteen hundred marines at Canea. These were drawn from the forces of each Power, except for Germany, which, though approving, had to send some later, since there were no German troops in the vicinity at the moment. Vassos received orders from his government to avoid all encounters with any of the Powers' forces. Seeking a solution to calm the agitation on the island, the Powers determined that self-government would be best; and on March 2 they promised formally to gain for Crete "an absolutely effective autonomy" within the Ottoman Empire. At the same time they asked the Greek government to withdraw its forces from Crete within six days.<sup>4</sup>

The Greek populace had meantime been stirred into a frenzy both by the unionist propaganda of the Ethnike Hetairia and by the sight of thousands of hapless Cretan refugees who were pouring into the country. Under these circumstances, the Greek government replied to the Powers that autonomy was insufficient and that the Greek troops would remain on Crete, though the government did agree to withdraw vessels which it had also sent to the island. In turn, the Powers' admirals in Cretan waters announced on March 19 that autonomy had been granted by the Ottoman Empire; and two days later the Powers began a blockade of Crete to force the Greek government to accept autonomy and to recoil from its bellicose attitude.<sup>5</sup>

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3. Paparrēgopoulos, *Historia tou Hellenikou Ethnous. Ekdosis Ektē meta Prosthekon ypo Pavlou Karolidou* [History of the Greek Nation. Eighth Edition with Additions by Pavlos Karolidēs] (7 vols.; Athens, 1932), VI, Part II, 69; Georgios K. Aspreas, *Politike Historia tēs Neoterās Hellados, 1821-1921* [Political History of Modern Greece, 1821-1921] (3 vols.; Athens, 1923-1930), II, 234-235, n. 2; Great Britain *Parliamentary Papers, Turkey No. 11* (1897): *Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of Crete and the War between Turkey and Greece* (London, 1897), no. 139.

4. Langer, *Diplomacy of Imperialism*, pp. 362-364; Driault and Lhéritier, *Histoire diplomatique*, IV, 348-349; Miller, *Ottoman Empire*, pp. 434-435; Mazarakēs-Ainianos, *Historikē Meletē* I, 279; *The Letters of Queen Victoria*, ed. George Earle Buckle, Series III, (New York, 1932), 131-133; *Turkey No. 11* (1897), no. 234; Great Britain, *Parliamentary Papers, Turkey No. 4* (1897): *Notes Addressed by the Representatives of Great Britain, Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, Italy, and Russia in Regard to Crete* (London, 1897), no. 3.

5. Langer, *Diplomacy of Imperialism*, p. 365; Driault and Lhéritier, *Histoire diplomatique*, IV 367-368; Great Britain, *Parliamentary Papers, Turkey No. 5* (1897): *Replies of the*

Despite the Greek government's intransigent attitude in public about union—a stand necessitated by the agitations in Greece—there were behind the scenes efforts to devise some autonomist solution which might be acceptable to Greece; and Prince George's name figured in this. As early as February 1897, about the time he took his ineffective naval expedition into Cretan waters, the Powers had considered making him ruler of Crete. His own quick acquiescence to the admirals in Cretan waters had left him in the good graces of their governments; and the plan to make him Cretan ruler was later envisaged as a way of ending the crisis caused by the landing of Greek troops on the island. During March 1897 Lord Salisbury, the British prime minister, talked about this with the French envoy in London; and it was rumored that France would make a formal proposal in the prince's favor. In late March, Osten-Sacken, the Russian ambassador at Berlin, said that he believed that if Prince George were made governor of Crete, the Greek troops would be withdrawn; and he asked Rhangaves, the Greek minister to Germany, to consult about this with his government. On April 2 the Powers' representatives at Constantinople discussed the possibility of installing the prince in Crete, the Russian ambassador being especially sympathetic to the plan. All told, the Russian government did favor George's becoming the Cretan ruler, although it forcefully opposed the military measures taken on the island by Greece. This situation arose because Tsar Nicholas II's mother, the Dowager Empress Maria Feodorovna, who was a sister of King George I, was hoping to help her brother by putting his son in Crete. There may even have been some assurances by Nicholas II to his Greek relatives on this question. Goluchowski, the Austrian minister of foreign affairs, said that Nicholas at his coronation in 1896 had promised his aunt, Queen Olga, wife of King George, that Prince George would become ruler of Crete. The contemporary press carried many unconfirmed reports about this imperial Russian intrigue. The London *Times* on April 1, for example, wrote that Dowager Empress Maria Feodorovna was visiting Denmark to work for the candidacy of her nephew, Prince George.<sup>6</sup>

*Turkish and Greek Governments to the Notes Addressed to them on March 2, 1897, by the Representatives of Great Britain, Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, Italy, and Russia in Regard to Crete* (London, 1897), no. 2; *Turkey No. 10* (1897), nos. 261, 300, 340; *Turkey No. 11* (1897), no. 252; DDF, Series I, XIII, no. 164; Aspreas, *Politikē Historia*, II, 247.

6. Driault and Lhéritier, *Histoire diplomatique*, IV, 337, 442; *Die Grosse Politik der Europäischen Kabinette*, 1871-1914, eds. Johannes Lepsius, Albrecht Mendelssohn Bartholdy, and Friedrich Thimme (40 vols.; Berlin, 1922-1927), XII, Part II, no. 3219; DDF, Series I, XIII, no. 171; *The Times* (London), April 1, 1897, p.5. See also *Lettres de la Princesse Radziwill au Général de Robilant*, 1889-1914 (4 vols.; Bologna, 1933-1934). II, 70-71.

These reports agitated the Ethnike Hetairia, which accused King George of pursuing purely dynastic interests. It said that he wanted a principality for his second son and did not care if the Greek-speaking territories in the Balkans and the Near East were not all united to his crown so long as these territories became principalities for each of his younger sons, of whom he had four, besides the heir to the throne, Prince Constantine. The press and politicians picked up these criticisms and accused Russia of a plot to parcel Hellenism in order to keep a preponderant influence over the small, weak states which would be created.<sup>7</sup>

Confronted by such sentiments the king could not openly espouse the candidacy of his son; and it was difficult for him to work behind the scenes for any Cretan settlement other than full union with Greece. Moreover, there was always the possibility that once an autonomous regime were established, the Cretans would lose all desire for union with Greece. The king must have wondered if in espousing Cretan autonomy—even with his own son as ruler—he might be dooming his own chances of one day ruling there. The *London Times* even reported that because of this danger, the king was absolutely against the prince's installation in the island, and that his sister, Maria Feodorovna, was attempting to win him over to the plan.<sup>8</sup>

According to a contemporary journalist, Henry Norman, Tsar Nicholas II actually informed King George that if he would recall Vassos, Russia would see that Prince George was placed in Crete within six months; but because of the sentiment against autonomy in Greece, the king replied that the prince could rule Crete only with a Greek statesman as his advisor, with a Greek flag as his standard, and with a Greek administrative and military control of the island.<sup>9</sup> This reply, of course, was tantamount to a demand for annexation; and for the moment nothing came of the tsar's proposal. King George, however, was ready to explore at least one other non-unionist settlement when he privately made known to Paul Cambon, the French ambassador at Constantinople, that he, the king, might agree to a solution which

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7. Victor Bérard, *Les affaires de Crète* (Paris, 1898), pp. 191-193; Henry Norman, "The Wreck of Greece," *Scribner's Magazine*, XXII, No. 4 (October, 1897), 414; Dēmētrios Vikelas, "Ho Polemos tou 1897 [The War of 1897], a manuscript partially reproduced in Alexandros Ar. Oikonomos, *Treis Anthropoi: Symvolē eis tēn Historian tou Hellenikou Laou* (1780-1935) [Three Men: A Contribution to the History of the Greek People (1780-1935)], II (Athens, 1953), 509; Oikonomos, *Treis Anthropoi*, II, 504.

8. *The Times* (London), April 1, 1897, p. 5.

9. Norman, *Scribner's Magazine*, XXII, No. 4. (October, 1897), 414-415.

would allow him to designate a Greek politician as ruler of an autonomous Crete.<sup>10</sup>

The Powers' efforts to keep the peace were cut short when Greek troops under heavy pressure from the Ethnike Hetairia attacked across the Greek-Turkish border during the night of April 16-17, a provocation which caused the Ottoman Empire to retaliate by declaring war the next day. The contest was uneven. Ably trained by a German military mission, the Turkish army swept into Greece and marched towards Athens, sweeping aside forces commanded by Crown Prince Constantine. Seeking the good will and the mediation of the Powers to save his country from utter destruction, King George recalled the Vassos expedition from Crete; and the Greek government formally recognized the March proclamation of Cretan autonomy. From Russia Tsar Nicholas II, fearful for the safety of his Greek relatives, appealed to Sultan Abdul Hamid II on May 17 to stop the Turkish advance. Within several days fighting had stopped; a definitive armistice was concluded on June 4; and the final peace treaty was signed at Constantinople on December 4, 1897. By its terms Greece paid an indemnity and agreed to minor frontier rectifications in the Ottoman Empire's favor. Crete remained Turkish.<sup>11</sup>

In Greece the pre-war propaganda that had condemned Prince George's installation in Crete as the beginning of a parceling of Hellenism had lost its impact. Military defeat had so thoroughly discredited the Ethnike Hetairia that it was heard of no more. Defeat, moreover, had impressed on the public as well as the king and the government that Cretan union with Greece was now impossible; and that Greece, whether it liked it or not, had to agree to an autonomous Crete. Under these circumstances the king and his government were seeking a Cretan regime which could keep the spark of union alive on the island. Plainly, a Cretan state headed by a son of the King of the Hellenes would best fulfill this desire, and would help revive the popularity of the Greek royal house, because the Greek people, subdued by the crushing effects of the war, could be persuaded that Prince George's installation was really an indication that Cretan union was drawing nearer.

10. DDF. Series I, XIII, no. 188.

11. Langer, *Diplomacy of Imperialism*, pp. 369-377; Miller, *Ottoman Empire*, pp. 436-438; Driault and Lhéritier, *Histoire diplomatique*, IV, 388-433; *Letters of Queen Victoria*, Series III, III, 150 ff.; *Die Grosse Politik*, XII, Part II, *passim*; *Turkey No. 11* (1897), *passim*; France, Ministère des Affaires Étrangères *Documents diplomatiques: Affaires d'Orient, Négociations pour la paix, Traité gréco-turc, mai-décembre 1897* (Paris, 1898), *passim*. A Greek text of the tsar's appeal to Abdul Hamid is given in Paparrégooulos, *Historia* VI, Part II, 82, n. 1 to 83.

The great obstacle to the installation of Prince George in Crete, not unnaturally, was the attitude of Sultan Abdul Hamid II and the Ottoman government. They had reluctantly accepted autonomy for Crete because of the pressure of the Powers. Could the sultan turn over a part of his territory to the son of a king whose forces the Turks had just trounced in battle? Cretan autonomy was one thing; the son of King George as ruler of Crete was another. No amount of persuasion seemed likely to move the sultan in this matter. Indeed, at the close of the war the candidacy of Prince George seemed impossible, something for which the Greek government should not realistically aspire. Nor did the Powers immediately revive their pre-war discussions about the prince, instead they considered other candidates.

In June 1897 the French government proposed Numa Droz, former president of the Swiss Confederation, to organize the autonomous regime. Droz seemed particularly suited for the position since he knew modern Greek; but he declined the candidature before the Powers could come to any definite decision about him. During the summer of 1897 little headway was made in seeking out another candidate, the Powers undoubtedly being hesitant to press the question lest the Ottoman government use it as a pretext to postpone the then still pending final war settlement with Greece. In October 1897 a native of Luxemburg named Colonel Schaefer, who had been in service in Egypt, presented himself as a candidate for provisional governor of the island; and at one point each Power seemed ready to accept him if another would formally propose his name. Since no one came forward to do this, his candidature dropped out of the picture. In November the Powers agreed that Bozhidar (Bojo) Petrovich, a cousin of Prince Nicholas of Montenegro, would be suitable for Crete; but Prince Nicholas refused to give his consent, saying that as a Balkan ruler he did not wish to hinder the aspirations of another Balkan state.<sup>12</sup>

With the failure of these candidatures the Russian government, following the express desire of Tsar Nicholas II, brought forth the name of Prince George again in December 1897. Nicholas did this to help his Greek relatives. To understand his persistence in this matter one must note that he

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12. Great Britain, *Parliamentary Papers, Turkey No. 12* (1897): *Further Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of Crete* (London, 1897), nos. 16, 17, 20, 30, 37, 39, 47, 49, 51, 54-59, 62, 64-73, 79-81, 83-85, 94-96, and *passim*; Great Britain, *Parliamentary Papers, Turkey No. 3* (1898): *Further Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of Crete* (London, 1898), nos. 245, 255, 266; Driault and Lhéritier, *Histoire diplomatique* IV, 442, n. 3. See also Andreas Sp. Skandamēs, *Pringips Georgios: Hē Zoē kai to Ergon tou* [Prince George: His Life and Work] (Athens, 1955) p. 71.

felt particularly close to Prince George. While they were in Japan together in 1891, George had saved Nicholas' life by striking down with a walking cane an assailant who tried to kill him. Strangely enough, the prince's bravery had not earned him the immediate praise of his uncle, Tsar Alexander III. On the contrary, Nicholas' Russian entourage, fearing that the tsar would punish them for not properly guarding his son, sent home reports which not only minimized the incident but also criticized the prince's general conduct during the tour. Because of this, George was not allowed to finish the trip with Nicholas. Although Alexander III later recognized his nephew's heroism and thanked him for it, Nicholas was greatly disturbed at the erroneous reports circulated about his cousin. Even after he became tsar, he remembered with gratitude the saving of his life. We find, for example, in his diary of 1896 a comment that he attended a religious service in which he thanked God for letting him be saved by Prince George in Japan.<sup>13</sup>

With such deep bonds of affection, and prompted by his mother, Nicholas II instructed the Russian government to support the candidature of the prince. Muraviev, the Russian foreign minister, at first objected but later agreed in an effort to please Nicholas II and Maria Feodorovna. On November 23 the Greek envoy at St. Petersburg was given to understand during a meeting with Russian ministers that the Russian government contemplated suggesting one of King George's sons as ruler of Crete. This is an important fact because the interview took place while the Russian government was ostensibly supporting the candidacy of Bozhidar Petrovich. Almost certainly the tsar and his government had prior knowledge that the Prince of Montenegro would refuse to give his consent; and they used Petrovich as a shield to hide Prince George's candidacy from the Turks until the peace treaty with Greece was completed.<sup>14</sup>

The timing of the prince's candidacy helps prove this point. On December 4 the Greek-Turkish peace treaty was signed; and on December 19 it was ratified. During this same month the Russian minister in Athens under orders from his government formally asked King George whether he would consent to his son's candidature. The king, who consulted with the prime minister, Alexander Zaimis, naturally replied affirmatively; he was, of course,

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13. Pringipissa Maria tēs Hellados, *Anamnēseis tes Vasilopaidos Marias* [Memoirs of the Royal Princess Marie] (Athens, 1951), pp. 61 ff.; Prince Nicholas of Greece (Prince of Denmark), *My Fifty Years* (London, 1926), pp. 102-105; Skandamēs, *Pringips Georgios*, pp. 36-41; *Die Tagebuch des letzten Jahren von 1890 bis zum Fall*, ed. Professor S. Melgunoff (Berlin, 1923), p. 61. The tsar's 1896 comment is on p. 168 of the latter work.

14. Driault and Lhéritier, *Histoire diplomatique*, IV, 443.



already in touch with his nephew and sister in Russia. Then on December 24, that is, less than a week after the ratifications of the peace treaty, the Russian ambassador at Berlin informed the German government that because Bozhidar Petrovich's candidacy had been rejected by the Prince of Montenegro, the Russian envoy at Constantinople had been instructed to submit the candidacy of Prince George to the conference of ambassadors there. In St. Petersburg, however, Muraviev maintained that the Constantinople ambassadors had actually envisaged the prince's candidature and that he had rallied to it because he could not find another suitable candidate. Marschall, the German ambassador in Constantinople, found this assertion inexact and observed that the Russian envoy at Constantinople, Yadovski, working closely with Mavrocordatos, the Greek minister, presented the candidature. Yadovski, said Marschall, had such high connections in Russia (an obvious reference to the imperial family) that he could pose a candidature which Muraviev did not want.<sup>15</sup>

Taken together, Muraviev's statement and Marschall's appraisal indicate that Muraviev was trying without mentioning his sovereign's name to show that the tsar was personally directing Russia's policy towards the Cretan issue. Furthermore, Muraviev's hazy references gave some of the Powers the impression at first that Russia had not presented George's name formally, but rather as a sounding out.<sup>16</sup> Muraviev's hedgings must not, however, obscure the fact that the Russian government in December 1897 stood firmly behind the candidature of the prince, no matter how reluctantly Muraviev had accepted it, and no matter how he tried to explain his policy.

The German government strongly opposed the prince's candidature because Emperor William II believed that it would bring great complications into the Eastern question. Austria, too, feared that the candidacy was a threat to the peace. Great Britain and France were in favor of the prince while Italy did not seem inclined to oppose him if the other Powers were agreed on him. As soon as the Ottoman government heard of the plan, it expressed its absolute opposition.<sup>17</sup>

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15. *Die Grosse Politik*, XII, Part, II, nos. 3255-3257, 3266; *Turkey No. 3* (1898), nos. 255, 256; Driault and Lhéritier, *Histoire diplomatique*, IV, 443-444.

16. *Turkey No. 3* (1898), nos. 269, 270.

17. *Turkey No. 3* (1898), nos. 266-274; Great Britain, *Parliamentary Papers, Turkey No. 5* (1898): *Further Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of Crete* (London, 1898), nos. 2, 3, 15, 18, 20, 22-29, 30, 32, 34, and *passim*; Driault and Lhéritier, *Histoire diplomatique*, IV, 445; *Die Grosse Politik*, XII, Part II, nos. 3255, 3269, 3273, 3276, and *passim*; DDF, Series I, XIV, nos. 5, 13, 16, 21, 22, 23.

From Athens on January 12, 1898, Baron von Plessen, the German minister, reported that Prime Minister Zaimis was wary of Russia's proposal. Although Zaimis believed that the prince's installation was the only present solution which would give some guarantee of peace for the island, he wondered about Russia's motives and speculated whether Russia might be using the candidature not in order to support the prince but to make a Cretan settlement more difficult. He questioned Russia's attitude particularly because he saw in it a reversal of the policy which had been followed before the Greek-Turkish war.<sup>18</sup> At that time, despite the efforts of the Dowager Empress Maria Feodorovna to place George in Crete, the Russian government had been firmly against Cretan union to Greece and had tried along with the other Powers to deter Greece from the bellicose policy she was following. Now the Russian government was espousing a solution which while not a full union would establish a close contact between Greece and Crete through Prince George.

Nevertheless the Russian proposal was sincere. Before the war the Russian government had opposed Greece's territorial extension because it feared that a large, strong Greece would become an obstacle to Russia's future expansion in the Balkans. Since Greece emerged from the war weak, the installation of Prince George in Crete could not be detrimental to Russia. Rather it presented both a workable solution for Cretan autonomy and offered the tsar an excellent opportunity to help his Greek relatives. Goaded on by his mother, Nicholas II changed Russia's foreign policy in this case from a purely national one to a dynastic one; but he could do this because no fundamental Russian interests were involved.<sup>19</sup> The maneuvers of Maria Feodorovna were evident to the statesmen of Europe. Without doubt her constant efforts to help her brother, King George, primarily influenced the tsar and Muraviev.<sup>20</sup>

King George had great faith in the efforts of his relatives to further Prince George's candidacy. To Demetrios Bikelas, the Greek author, he confided in January 1898 that they had assured him the prince would become the Cretan ruler. In England, where public opinion favored Prince George, there was also a family connection to help him. King George's eldest sister,

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18. *Die Grosse Politik*, XII, Part, II, no. 3262. Similar Austrian suspicions are reported in *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914*, eds. G.P. Gooch, and Harold Temperley (11 vols.; London. 1926-1938), I, no. 367.

19. Cf. Holstein's comments in *Die Grosse Politik*, XII, Part II, no. 3264.

20. See the remarks about the empress in *Die Grosse Politik*, XII, Part II, no. 3263; and *Lettres de la Princesse Radziwill*, II, 118.

Alexandra, was married to the Prince of Wales; and she and her husband worked for their nephew's candidacy. At their country home at Sandingham in late January they received the Russian ambassador, de Staal, and explained to him how anxious they were to have Prince George made the Cretan ruler. The Prince of Wales even suggested that Russian insistence would force the sultan to accept the prince; but de Staal pointed out that German and Austrian opposition put the successful completion of the plan in doubt.<sup>21</sup>

Late in January 1898, also, Nicholas II urged Abdul Hamid to accept Prince George and informed him that King George had promised that the prince would go to Constantinople for investiture in order to show that the integrity of the Ottoman Empire was being maintained. The sultan was not impressed by this argument; and he and his government continued to declare emphatically that the selection of a Greek prince was impossible and that only an Ottoman subject could become governor of Crete. The Russians refused to support the candidacy of anyone else, although they were unwilling to press the issue by using coercive measures against the sultan; and the candidacy question dragged on.<sup>22</sup>

On March 12 Muraviev told Radolin, the German ambassador at St. Petersburg, that the choice of Prince George was the only guarantee of tranquillity in Crete. As for the sultan, said Muraviev, no candidate could be as advantageous as the prince because the sultan would have a vassal who was related to the British and Russian royal houses, a flattering arrangement which would assure Abdul Hamid that his empire remained intact. Then Muraviev suggested that to avoid undue Greek influence in Crete Prince George might take with him a non-Greek entourage, perhaps even a Danish one. Emphasizing that union would not be allowed, Muraviev dismissed a rumor which had been circulating in the European chancelleries to the effect that England wanted control of Crete's Suda Bay. He said that neither the British royal family nor British public opinion, which was very philhellene, would allow Greek interests to be hurt in this way. With regard to the shift in Russian policy towards Crete, he asserted that the situation had changed and that no candidate other than Prince George was available. At the close

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21. Vikelas, "Ho Polemos tou 1897", in Oikonomos, *Treis Anthropol*, II, 533-534; *Correspondence diplomatique de Baron de Staal*, 1884-1900, published by Alexander Meyendorff, II (Paris, 1929), 370-371; Sir Sidney Lee, *King Edward VII: A Biography* (2 vols.; London, 1925-1927), I, 495; Sir George Arthur, *Queen Alexandra* (London, 1934), pp.193-194. For the Prince of Wales' pressure on de Staal see *Die Grosse Politik* XII, Part II, no. 3281.

22. *Turkey No. 5* (1898), nos. 32, 34, 38, 39, 42, 45, and *passim*; *Die Grosse Politik*, XII, Part, II, no. 3277; DDF, Series I, XIV, nos. 24, 29, and *passim*.

of the interview Muraviev denied that he was supporting the prince in order to be agreeable to Maria Feodorovna; he said he espoused the candidacy only with general political interests in mind.<sup>23</sup>

In reading and annotating the report of this interview Emperor William II disagreed with Muraviev's reasoning and commented on the intrigues of the dowager empress, which certainly did affect Russian policies. But William also noted that he did not care whether or not Prince George was chosen.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, under the emperor's command the German government refused to take further part in the Cretan question; and on March 16 the German troops and ship were recalled from Crete. This was, of course, a great change from Germany's previous attitude. What prompted it? Some evidence shows that William II and his chancellor, Bülow, were piqued that the other Powers were not accepting German suggestions in trying to settle Crete. However, this can hardly explain why Germany withdrew entirely from the deliberations. Most likely, William and Bülow realized that Abdul Hamid would be dissatisfied with whatever settlement was reached; and they decided not to risk German-Turkish friendship by participating in a decision to which the sultan would undoubtedly object. The Austrian government, following Germany, also withdrew from Crete; and in this way the regulation of the island's affairs was left to France, Russia, Great Britain, and Italy.<sup>25</sup>

The four Powers spent the spring and most of the summer of 1898 in futile discussions with the Ottoman Empire in an effort to establish Cretan autonomy. The candidature of Prince George continued to be opposed bitterly by Abdul Hamid who in April 1898 sent his secretary, Ali Djevad Bey, to St. Petersburg to persuade the Russian government that an Ottoman subject ought to be governor of Crete. Although Nicholas II received him, Djevad failed to alter Russian policy; and he returned home with the information that the Russian government considered Prince George the only possible candidate. Still the sultan remained adamant; and the four Powers continued to delay the establishment of the autonomy which all the Powers had promised the Cretans more than a year before.<sup>26</sup>

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23. *Die Grosse Politik*, XII, Part, II, no. 3289.

24. *Die Grosse Politik*, XII, Part II, no. 3289.

25. *Die Grosse Politik*, XII, Part, II, no. 3290; *Turkey No. 5* (1898), nos. 104, 105, 116, 118, 123, 124; Langer, *Diplomacy of Imperialism*, p. 377; DDF, Series, I, XIV, nos. 85, 92; Driault and Lhéritier, *Histoire diplomatique*, IV, 449-450, 454-456; S.B. Chester (Chester of Wethersfield and Blaby), *Life of Venizelos* (London, 1921), p. 60.

26. *Turkey No. 5* (1898), nos. 203, 233 for the mission of Djevad, and *passim* for events until the end of June 1898.

The postponement was raising the apprehensions of the Cretan Christians, always easily excitable; and the four Powers, realizing the extent of discontent, allowed the Cretans in July to establish a provisional Executive Committee, which was to govern the parts of the island which the Christian insurgents already controlled. This meant the Christians would rule all Crete except for the coastal areas, where the Powers' troops were stationed. Here too were located Turkish civilian authorities and Turkish troops.<sup>27</sup>

The extension of the Christian authority angered the Moslems; and on September 6 when a detachment of British troops at Herakleion attempted on orders of the admirals to take control of an office collecting revenues for the Ottoman government, the Moslems of the city attacked the soldiers and went on a rampage of killing, burning, and looting against the Christians. The available British forces were insufficient to stop the outbreak, while the Turkish troops helped the mob spread havoc and destruction. One British officer, thirteen service men, and the British vice-consul were killed. About forty other British troops were wounded. Of the more than one thousand Christians in Herakleion only about three hundred escaped with their lives.<sup>28</sup>

The violence of this Moslem outbreak finally prodded the four Cretan Powers into setting up the autonomous regime. The participation by Turkish troops in the Herakleion massacres seemed to substantiate charges made by the Christians that these troops would always be a constant danger to tranquillity; and the four Powers demanded early in October that the Ottoman Empire withdraw all its armed forces from Crete. Under pressure, the sultan complied; and by November 15 the evacuation was completed. Following a Russian proposal, a new scheme was devised for installing Prince George in Crete. Instead of his being made a governor subject to appointment by the sultan, he was to become the High Commissioner of the four Powers, responsible only to them. The sultan objected; and he appealed directly to the tsar, but to no avail.<sup>29</sup>

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27. I.D. Mourellos, *Historia tēs Krētēs* [History of Crete] (3 vols.; 2nd ed.; Herakleion, n.d.), III, 1638-1640; Jean-Stanislaw Dutkowski, *L'Occupation de la Crète, 1897-1909* (Paris, 1952), pp. 60-61; Chester, *Venizelos*, pp. 62-63.

28. Mourellos, *Historia*, III, 1644-1656, which includes some eyewitness accounts of the Herakleion happenings; Great Britain, *Parliamentary Papers, Turkey No. 7* (1898): *Further Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of Crete* (London, 1898), nos. 15, 25, 38, 50, 91, 95, and *passim*; Dutkowski, *Crète*, pp. 66-67; Chester, *Venizelos*, pp. 64-65; Herbert Adams Gibbons, *Venizelos* (Boston, 1920), pp. 35-36; Driault and Lhéritier, *Histoire diplomatique*, IV, 460; Skandames *Pringips Georgios*, p. 74.

29. *Turkey No. 7* (1898), nos 165, 243, and *passim*; Driault and Lhéritier, *Histoire diplo-*

King George was warmly in favor of the new plan, which from the Greek point of view was better than having the prince a Turkish appointee. On November 26 the representatives of the four Cretan Powers at Athens presented to the king a *pro memoria* formally asking him to allow Prince George to accept a mandate as High Commissioner in Crete. The prince was to have a term of three years, during which he would establish a regular system of administration and pacify the island. He was to recognize the suzerainty of the sultan over Crete, and to safeguard a Turkish flag, which would be flown over one island fort to symbolize the sultan's rights. The prince's first care would be to organize the autonomous government and a gendarmerie or local militia. To help him start out, each of the four Powers was to give Crete an advance of one million francs.

Receiving the *pro memoria*, the king thanked the four Powers for their benevolence towards his family, gave his consent to the prince's appointment, and expressed the hope that these Powers would help his son develop the prosperity of all the Cretans. Then the prince himself accepted the mandate and asked for the four Powers' assistance.<sup>30</sup>

On November 30 the Ottoman government was officially notified of the prince's selection as High Commissioner; and on December 5 the blockade of Crete, which had lasted since March 1897, was raised. The next day King George appointed Prince George a vice-admiral in the Greek navy; but before the prince could leave for Crete, the design of the new Cretan flag had to be settled. The prince hoped to have a cross and nothing else on the flag, and he appealed to Nicholas II to support this. Finally the prince agreed to let the ambassadors of the four Powers at Constantinople devise the flag for Crete. Their design was similar to the Greek national flag, being a white cross on a blue field, but differing from the Greek one by having in the upper left canton a white five pointed star on a red background to show the sultan's rights.<sup>31</sup>

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*matique*, IV, 460-464; France, Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, *Documents diplomatiques: Affaires d'Orient, Évacuation de la Crète par les troupes ottomanes, Installation d'un Haut Commissaire, octobre-novembre 1898* (Paris, 1898), nos. 6-8, and *passim* for attitudes of the Powers on the selection of Prince George.

30. *Affaires d'Orient, Évacuation de la Crète, octobre-novembre 1898*, no. 70; Great Britain, *Parliamentary Papers, Turkey No. 1* (1899): *Further Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of Crete* (London, 1899), no. 115; Chester, *Venizelos*, p. 70; Driault and Lhéritier, *Histoire diplomatique*, IV, 464-465; S. Th. Lascars, *Diplomatike Historia tes Hellados, 1821-1914* [Diplomatic History of Greece, 1821-1914] (Athens, 1947), pp. 200-201.

31. Driault and Lhéritier, *Histoire diplomatique*, IV, 466; *Turkey No. 1* (1899), no. 163; Chester, *Venizelos*, p. 72, n. 1.

With the matter of the flag settled, Prince George was ready to leave Greece for Crete. His departure on December 19 was obviously arranged with great solemnity to express the satisfaction and pride felt by King George and the Greek government. It was also calculated to emphasize that while going to his new post, the prince would remember, above all, that he was a Greek prince who chose to maintain close ties with home. Thousands of Greeks lined the streets of Athens as he, dressed in his vice-admiral's uniform, with his father and other members of the royal family went in procession to the cathedral for a doxology in which the Metropolitan of Athens prayed that the prince might succeed in his mission. Crowds gathered also at the Piraeus where Prince George, accompanied by his parents, his brothers and sister, embarked on the royal yacht for the island of Melos. There he said farewell to his family and transferred to a Russian ship which, accompanied by vessels of the other three Cretan Powers, took him on the last part of his trip. On December 21, dressed again in his Greek vice-admiral's uniform, he landed on Crete at Suda harbor, some six kilometers from Canea, which was to be his new capital. As he set foot on the island, the prince made the sign of the cross; and then he proceeded into Canea through streets decorated with ceremonial archways, myrtle boughs, Cretan flags, flags of the four Cretan Powers, and pictures of himself and his father. All about him were the wild acclamations of Christians who had gathered to welcome him. Even the Moslems, caught up perhaps by the spirit of the day or, more likely, understanding that Turkish rule was over forever and seeking to accommodate themselves to the new state of affairs, gave evidence of a gracious reception.<sup>32</sup>

Once at Canea the prince attended a doxology during which the royal hymn (the *polychronion*) was sung. Significantly, it included the name of King George as well as that of Prince George even though, of course, the island of Crete was not a part of the king's realm. Following this service, the prince went to Canea's Government House, where the admirals formally gave over the rule of the island to him.<sup>33</sup> Shortly thereafter, from a balcony he personally read to the Cretans his first proclamation in which he said:

"Russia, England, France and Italy have appointed me as their High Com-

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32 Skandamēs, *Pringips Geōrgios*, pp. 77-83; *Turkey No. 1* (1899), nos. 168-169; Prince George, *Cretan Drama*, pp. 19-20. The statement in *Cretan Drama*, (p. 19) that Prince George was accompanied to Melos by his "sisters" must be a typographical error, since in 1898 he had only one living sister, the Princess Marie.

33. Skandamēs, *Pringips Geōrgios*, pp. 83-84; *Turkey No. 1* (1899), nos 173-174, 194; Prince George, *Cretan Drama*, p. 20.

missioner in your autonomous country. It is in response to your wishes that I have consented to undertake the Government of Crete. I am fully conscious of my duties, and I am well aware of the difficulties of my task, but I have an absolute reliance on your love of your country which will enable me to carry out the decision of Europe and to fulfill your hopes."<sup>34</sup>

The prince had scarcely reached Crete and he was already speaking of the islanders' hopes! This reference meant only one thing, the Christians desire to join with Greece. It was an indication of the unionist policy the prince was to follow in the future.

There can be no doubt that the Christians welcomed the prince as their Greek savior who would bring peace and prosperity to the island. George, in turn, enthusiastic at the mandate given him, was eager to begin his task. That it would all end in bitterness and disillusion for him was something no one could foresee. For the moment everything seemed full of promise for the prince and for the islanders.

Prince George's installation in Crete thus brought about a reversal of rôles after the Greek-Turkish war of 1897. Greece had lost the war, but a Greek prince had become ruler over a part of the victor's empire. Family connections of the Greek royal house had helped mitigate the effects of a decisive defeat in battle and had brought direct Greek influence into Crete, the prize over which the war of 1897 had been fought.

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34. *Turkey No. 1 (1899)*, no. 190. See also Mourellos, *Historia*, III, 1693-1694; Skandamēs, *Pringips Geōrgios*, pp. 85-86; Prince George, *Cretan Drama*, pp. 20-21.