

KING GEORGE I AND THE EXPANSION OF GREECE, 1875-1881

The great Near Eastern crisis of the late 1870's gave Greece's King George I (1863-1913) an opportunity to work for his country's territorial expansion at the expense of the Ottoman Empire. His endeavors at that time show the extent to which dynastic considerations could still affect European international relations during the nineteenth century, and indicate also quite vividly the limitations of personal, royal diplomacy.¹

King George, a member of the House of Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Glücksburg who had been elected King of the Hellenes in 1863, had already made another significant attempt to expand Greece. That was between 1866 and 1869 when he tried to persuade the Powers that Crete, then in revolt against Ottoman rule, ought to be ceded to Greece. The king's venture into diplomacy had failed utterly; the Powers, instead of pressing the Turks to give up Crete, blockaded Greece in 1869 to force the Greek government to recoil from a belligerent attitude it had adopted toward the Ottoman Empire.

Faced with the failure of the past, King George moved cautiously at first when the Powers tried to end peacefully a revolt which had broken out in July, 1875, in the Ottoman provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and which threatened to spread throughout the Turkish possessions. The Russian government, particularly, was anxious to secure reforms for the two embattled Slavic provinces. Meanwhile, the governments of Montenegro and Serbia were becoming more and more eager to intervene militarily in favor of the rebels.²

1. This article is adapted from materials in Chapter IV of the author's unpublished doctoral dissertation, "The Role of the Monarchy in Greek Foreign Affairs during the Reign of King George I, 1863-1913" (Department of History, Harvard University, 1965). Grateful acknowledgment is made both to the Foreign Affairs Branch at the National Archives, Washington for permission to use the archives of the Department of State and also to the Library Company of Philadelphia and the University of Rochester Library for permission to use their collections of John Meredith Read papers, cited in footnotes below.

2. On the Bosnia and Herzegovina situation see William L. Langer, *European Alliances and Alignments* (2nd ed. with supplementary bibliographies; New York, 1950), pp. 72-75.

Realizing that the Greek government had insufficient funds to mobilize against the Ottoman Empire, King George and his prime minister, Alexander Coumoundouros, worked to keep Greece out of any anti-Turkish movement. When the Prince of Serbia, Milan, tried to negotiate a Greek-Serbian alliance in October, 1875, he was informed that Greece was militarily unprepared. King George himself helped draft the telegram to Milan dealing with this matter; and the king praised Coumoundouros when the prime minister secretly advised Greeks living in the Ottoman territories of Thessaly, Epirus, and Crete to remain quiet for the time being. The king and Coumoundouros seem to have hoped that this neutral attitude would help win over the Powers, so that if the Ottoman Empire were forced to make concessions in favor of the subject peoples, Greeks as well as Slavs would draw substantial benefits. Besides, both men probably felt that by remaining quiet, Greece might gain territorial concessions in Thessaly or Epirus, if the Powers decided on any changes in the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire.³

Anxious to explain his country's stand personally to the leading European monarchs and statesmen, King George, accompanied by his wife, Queen Olga, and their children, set out from Athens in April, 1876. His main plan was to persuade the Powers that any concessions that might be made for the Slavic provinces of the Ottoman Empire ought to be applied also to the Greek-inhabited Ottoman provinces bordering on Greece.⁴

The king had family connections which gave him particular opportunity for such personal diplomacy. He was the son of Denmark's King Christian IX. George's sister, Alexandra, was the Princess of Wales. Another sister, Maria Feodorovna, was married to the Tsarevich Alexander, son of Tsar Alexander II. George's wife, Queen Olga, a Russian grand duchess by birth, was a niece of the tsar and a great-niece of the German Emperor, William I. At the very least, these relationships and George's position as a reigning sovereign assured him of a hearing at all the great courts of Europe.

King George first visited Vienna, where he was cordially welcomed by the imperial family and governmental officials. Emperor Francis Joseph and Count Julius Andrassy, the foreign minister, told him that because Greece had maintained a peaceful foreign policy in the Near Eastern crisis, any

3. Édouard Driault and Michel Lhéritier, *Histoire diplomatique de la Grèce de 1821 à nos jours* (5 vols.; Paris, 1925-1926), III, 379-397. This work is hereafter cited as DL.

4. United States Department of State, Despatches from United States Ministers to Greece, 1868-1906, VI, Read to Fish, Athens April 22, 1876. This collection is referred to hereafter as Department of State, Despatches from Greece, 1868-1906; Tryphonos E. Evangelides, *Ta meta ton Othona* [Events after Otho] (Athens, 1898?) p. 373.

measures the Powers would advocate for the Ottoman Slavs would also be extended to the Ottoman Greeks, who could count on the support of Austria and Germany. Andrassy stressed that although Austria was well disposed to Greek territorial extension, the Greeks should avoid stirring up insurrections in the Ottoman Empire.⁵ This, of course, was exactly what King George and Coumoundouros had anticipated to be the desire of all the Powers.

Traveling on to London, the king found that his sister, the Princess of Wales, was truly moved by his difficulties. In March she had already written, "I grieve to think what a hard task my poor brother has before him . . ."⁶ He knew that he could depend upon her to plead his cause with her husband and British officials; and she now pledged that she would do her best to watch over George's interests in England. From Queen Victoria, Alexandra's mother-in-law, the king received the Order of the Garter; and to Disraeli, the prime minister, he described Greece's claims for the incorporation of Thessaly, Epirus, and Crete into the Greek kingdom. Disraeli, however, did not promise any backing for these aspirations.⁷

King George's other visits during this trip, which lasted until early November, followed a similar pattern: he pleaded, the foreign statesmen listened; but they refused to make any binding commitments about Greece's future. George received only expressions of good will for himself. Perhaps these flattered him, but they did not help his country.

While the king was on his trip the Near Eastern situation became even more critical. In May the Bulgarians revolted, only to be crushed by the Turks within four months. On June 30 Serbia declared war on the Ottoman Empire; and Montenegro followed suit two days later. The Montenegrins managed to hold their own; but the Serbian army under the command of a Russian general, Chernaiev, suffered one defeat after another. In Russia agitation to join the war on the side of the Serbs was mounting; and after the Russian government presented Turkey with an ultimatum, the Turks on November 1 agreed to an armistice, which included both Montenegro and Serbia.

Such was the situation when King George returned to Athens on November 7 after more than six months' absence. He found that Prime Minister Coumoundouros was facing increasing attacks from opposition leaders who

5. DL, III, 396; S. Th. Lascaris, *La politique extérieure de la Grèce avant et après le congrès de Berlin (1875-1881)* (Paris, 1924), p. 25.

6. Sir Sidney Lee, *King Edward VII: A Biography* (2 vols.; London, 1925-1927), I, 267. See also Sir George Arthur, *Queen Alexandra* (London, 1934), p. 177.

7. Lee, *King Edward*, I, 267; E. E. P. Tisdall, *Royal Destiny: the Royal Hellenic Cousins* (London, 1955), p. 43.

wanted Greece to mobilize in order to be ready to defend by force, if necessary, her claims in the Ottoman Empire. To meet such criticisms Coumoundouros asked the Chamber to enact legislation for a loan to purchase extensive military equipment. When the Chamber failed to give him a vote of confidence on this matter, he resigned, shortly after the king's return. Epaminondas Deligeorges became prime minister for a few days; but he, also failed to win a vote of confidence. Then after a good deal of parliamentary maneuvering, Coumoundouros emerged as prime minister again in December. Although he took steps to purchase arms from abroad, his political opponents, lead by Deligeorges, called his policies inadequate; and in March, 1877, he resigned. Deligeorges became prime minister and continued to build up the army. He was still in office on April 24 when the Russian government, having been unable to agree on any reform projects with the Turks, declared war on the Ottoman Empire.⁸

The British government was anxious to keep Greece from joining the war and extending the crisis in the Near East. The Princess of Wales happened to be visiting her brother, King George, at that moment; and on May 20 Disraeli asked the Prince of Wales to warn King George that Greece should be careful in international affairs and not join Russia against the Ottoman Empire. The prince telegraphed his advice while Alexandra was still in Greece. Otherwise, her visit had little else political about it.⁹

George's pleasure at having his sister with him for a visit which lasted from April 10 to May 29 must have been somewhat spoiled by the attention he had to give to the possibility of Greece's entering the Russo-Turkish war. In contrast to the advice from the Prince of Wales, the King was being urged to attack the Ottoman Empire by the Grand Duke Nicholas, Queen Olga's uncle and commander of the Russian army of the Danube. The king and Prime

8. DL, III, 399-400, 402-403, 405-412; Department of State, Despatches from Greece, 1868-1906, VII, Read to Fish, Athens, February 10, 1877; February 17, 1877, February 24, 1877, and March 10, 1877; Georgios K. Aspreas, *Politike Historia tes Neoteris Hellados*, 1821-1921 [Political History of Modern Greece, 1821-1921] (3 vols.; Athens, 1923-1930), II, 76-79. Aspreas fails to mention that Deligeorges replaced Coumoundouros as prime minister in March, 1877. For the Near Eastern crisis from May, 1876, to April, 1877, see Langer, *European Alliance*, pp. 81-117; and William Miller, *The Ottoman Empire and its Successors*, 1801-1927 with an Appendix, 1927-1936 (4th ed.; Cambridge, Eng., 1936), pp. 364-373.

9. Lee, *King Edward*, I, 268. For the social aspects of Alexandra's visit see John Meredith Read Papers: The University of Rochester Library, Department of Special Collections. 10 boxes (hereafter cited as Read Papers, Rochester). Box II, Read Manuscript from Note Book 101, pp. 1-23.

Minister Deligeorges discussed whether to follow the grand duke's advice; but George was most hesitant to intervene because he feared that a Russian victory would profit only the Slavs in the Ottoman Empire, not the Greeks.¹⁰

War became an issue of such national importance that Deligeorges resigned on May 28 and then joined with other leading politicians to form a coalition government, which, taking office in June, was usually referred to as the Ecumenical Government. The eighty-eight year old hero of the Greek War of Independence Admiral Constantine Canaris, came out of retirement to assume the prime ministership. Coumoundouros became minister of the interior; and Deligeorges, minister of finance. The new minister of foreign affairs was Charilaos Tricoupis. He immediately tried to secure British support for Greek expansion, although he was vague about the kind of assistance he sought. Tricoupis did tell the British minister at Athens that Greece was not planning to send its army into Thessaly for the moment, but he added that the country had to arm in order to meet any exigency. From England Lord Derby, the foreign secretary, called for prudence by Greece and warned against any Greek attempt to start revolts in the Ottoman Empire.¹¹

Conversely, from the great fortress of Plevna, where the Turks had stopped the Russian advance, Tsar Alexander II, Queen Olga's uncle, personally appealed to King George to attack the Ottoman Empire so that some of the Turkish forces would have to be diverted. Although the king was inclined to accept this direct plea from the tsar, the Ecumenical Government, remembering British advice, held back because the ministers feared that the Turkish fleet might attack the Piraeus if Britain were to stand aside. Still they did not want abruptly to turn down an appeal from the tsar. Instead, in return for assistance they asked for Russian assurances that Greece would receive Thessaly, Epirus Macedonia, and parts of Thrace, and that Russian ships would protect the Greek shores. The Russians considered this as tantamount to a rejection; and from this time on Alexander II was decidedly cool towards Greece.¹²

10. DL, III, 414-418; Aspreas, *Historia*, II, 84, 92. See also Evangelides, *Ta meta*, pp. 376 ff.; Pavlos Karolides, *Synchronos Historia ton Hellenon apo 1821 mechri 1921* [Contemporary History of the Hellenes from 1921 to 1921] (7 vols.; Athens, 1923-1927), VII, 214.

11. Department of State, Despatches from Greece, 1868-1906, VII, Read to Evarts, Athens, June 8, 1877; S. Th. Lascaris *Diplomatike Historia tes Hellados, 1821-1914* [Diplomatic History of Greece, 1821-1914] (Athens, 1947), p. 148; Evangelides, *Ta meta*, p. 392; Great Britain, *Parliamentary Papers, Turkey No. 19* (1878): *Correspondence Respecting the Relations between Turkey and Greece* (London, 1878), nos. 1-4, 7, 8. See also Lascaris, *La politique extérieure*, pp. 66-84.

12. Karolides, *Synchronos Historia*, VII, 215-216.

All the while, despite continued warnings from Britain, which was joined by France and Austria, the Ecumenical Government, with the consent of the king, was calling out reserves and purchasing weapons from Krupp to increase the country's military strength. By September the army, which had previously numbered 12,000, had been increased to 25,000. That same month Canaris died, leaving the prime ministership vacant, since there was no other candidate on whom all the ministers could agree for the office.¹³

Headless, the Ecumenical Government stayed together only because the king pleaded that the country needed unity. The ministers were themselves developing ideas about Greece's participation in the war. Tricoupis, the minister of foreign affairs, wanted initially to evolve a plan—whatever it might be—that would gain the acceptance of Britain; but by early November he was becoming more and more bellicose in his attitude. Coumoundouros and Theodore Delyannis, the minister of church affairs, did not call for war, although they hoped they could build up revolutionary groups inside the Ottoman Empire to Greece's advantage. Deligeorges was against this; and he spoke of resigning.¹⁴

The situation changed radically after December 11 when news arrived in Athens that Plevna had finally been taken by the Russians the day before. Up to that time it had seemed possible that peace might be concluded on the basis of the *status quo ante bellum*.¹⁵ But a strong Russian advance which began after the fall of Plevna made it appear virtually certain that Russia would be able to dictate her own peace terms. King George had to decide quickly whether to lead his country into war and share in the spoils.

The sight of a weakened Ottoman Empire giving Greece a chance to expand helped the king make up his mind. He urged his ministers to agree on war; but they, mindful of the country's military unpreparedness, and heeding continued warnings from the British, who were joined by France and Austria, would not agree. Obviously going out of his way to show his feelings, the king in late December told the French minister at Athens that all Greece wanted war and that he was ready to abdicate if the country did not come out of the crisis with some territorial gains. On December 29 he left Athens on a short trip to Thebes and Chalkis to inspect the troops. By January, 1878,

13. *Turkey No. 19* (1878), nos. 13-15, 24, 25, 48, 51, 68, 76, 103, 106; Evangelides, *Ta meta*, p. 425; DL, III, 435-436.

14. *Turkey No. 19* (1878), nos. 109, 113, 120, 126, 127, 132; Karolides, *Synchronos Historia*, VII, 242-243.

15. See Bernard von Bülow, *Memoirs of Prince von Bülow*, tr. Geoffrey Dunlop and F. A. Voigt (4 vols.; Boston, 1931-1932), IV, 428.

Saburov, the Russian representative at Athens, was reporting home that the king was ready to put himself at the head of Greece's army for an invasion of the Ottoman Empire, and that Queen Olga wanted to accompany her husband on the campaign.¹⁶

Faced with the king's insistent attitude the Ecumenical Government resigned on January 22, 1878. Two days later Coumoundouros became prime minister with Theodor Delyannis as minister of foreign affairs.¹⁷

Just when the new government was about to discuss in the Chamber on January 26 whether Greece should enter the war, came news that peace was imminent between Russia and the Ottoman Empire. That same day crowds, spurred on by Athenian toughs, began to shout in the streets that the country had missed an opportunity to enlarge itself. One such group marched to the palace and enthusiastically called for the king. Although he appeared along with Queen Olga and their eldest son, Prince Constantine, an appeal George made for quiet was disregarded; and the situation grew out of hand. The homes of Tricoupis, Delyannis, Deligeorges, Coumoundouros and other politicians were stoned; and public order was not completely restored for three days. Since the protests were aimed at all the leading politicians, and since no evidence was discovered to connect any political party with the disturbances, they seem to have been a spontaneous manifestation of popular dissatisfaction. Only King George was spared public criticism.¹⁸ As the American representative at Athens, General John Meredith Read, reported him, "One of the most remarkable features of this painful crisis was the unanimous confidence and respect manifested against [*sic*] the character of the Sovereign."¹⁹

To stop further criticisms the Coumoundouros government with the approval of King George sent regular Greek troops across the border at Lamia into Thessaly during the morning of February 2. Apparently the government did not know until the next day that on January 31 an armistice and preliminaries of peace had been signed between Russia and the Ottoman Empire at Adrianople.²⁰

16. Department of State, Despatches from Greece, 1868-1906, VII, Read to Evarts, Athens, December, 1878; *Turkey No. 19* (1878), no. 137; DL, III, 443-450.

17. Department of State, Despatches from Greece, 1868-1906, VII, Read to Evarts, Athens, January 26, 1878; DL, III, 450; Aspreas, *Historia*, II, 91; Lascaris, *Diplomatike Historia*, p. 156; Evangelides, *Ta meta*, p. 439.

18. *Turkey No. 19* (1878), no. 174; Aspreas, *Historia*, II, 91-92; DL, III, 451.

19. Department of State, Despatches from Greece, 1868-1906, VII, Read to Evarts, Athens, January 29, 1878.

20. *Turkey No. 19* (1878), nos. 182, 184, 185, 189; Department of State, Despatches

The Greek position was most delicate. Tsar Alexander II sent a message to King George regretting that Greece had chosen to begin hostilities the moment Russia concluded an armistice; and the Russian envoy in Athens was instructed to advise the king in the name of the tsar to recall the Greek troops. This stand for recall was also firmly taken by the other Powers, who did not want further hostilities against the Ottoman Empire. During the evening of February 6 the withdrawal order was given the Greek troops; and by February 11 they had all repassed the frontier.²¹

About a month later, Russia and the Ottoman Empire signed the Treaty of San Stephano, which created a huge autonomous Bulgarian principality, stretching from the Black Sea to the Aegean and with the exception of Thessaloniki and the Chalcidice peninsula including most of the Macedonia territory that Greece hoped to gain from the Ottoman Empire. King George and the Greek government were appalled by the treaty, which they regarded as a Russian attempt to set up a vassal state in the Balkans. Had the king and the Ecumenical Government been a little less cagy and given in to Russia earlier, Greece might have benefited from the spoils of war. Now Greece's future expansion seemed seriously menaced. As it happened, however, none of the other Powers were content to let Russia become the dominant state in the Balkans, so that they forced her to agree to the Congress of Berlin, which finally greatly reduced the large Bulgaria of San Stephano.²²

The gathering of the Powers at Berlin in 1878 gave King George a chance to work for Greek expansion into Thessaly, Epirus, and Crete. In these endeavors he was aided by his sister, Alexandra, and the Prince of Wales. Alexandra apparently even attempted to convince the British plenipotentiaries to Congress that the Greek claims were just. The Prince of Wales was initially more cautious when the king urged him to intervene with Disraeli to support Greek claims in Epirus and Thessaly; but later the prince pleaded that Greece

from Greece, 1868-1906, VII, Read to Evarts, Athens, February 5, 1878, and February 8, 1878; DL, III, 451-454; Aspreas, *Historia*, II, 92-94; Bülow, *Memoirs*, IV, 434; Karolidis, *Synchronos Historia*, VII, 243.

21. Department of State, Despatches from Greece, 1868-1906, VII, Read to Evarts, Athens, February 6, 1878; *Turkey No. 19* (1878), nos. 165, 167, 169, 170, 176, 177, 188, 191, 193, 194, 198, 199, 200; DL, III, 457-460; W. N. Medlicott, *Bismarck, Gladstone, and the Concert of Europe* (London, 1956), p. 72; France, Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, *Documents diplomatiques français*, 1871-1914 (41 vols.; Paris, 1929-1959), Series I, II, no. 244, which is hereafter cited as DDF.

22. For details see Medlicott, *Bismarck, Gladstone, passim*.

should gain some concessions at the Congress; and while it was in session he asked Disraeli to support Greek expansion.²³

The Greek question played a minor role in the Congress's deliberations; but the appeals made by King George and his relatives did have some effect. Following a proposal by Waddington, the French foreign minister, the Thirteenth Protocol of the Congress asked the Ottoman Empire to change its boundaries with Greece, so that the Greek northern border would extend east as far as the Peneios River and west to the Kalamas River. In article twenty-four of the Treaty of Berlin the Powers reserved their right to mediate if the Greeks and Turks were unable to agree to the boundary changes envisaged in the Protocol.²⁴

The Congress's decision on the Greek border was reached on July 5. The next day Disraeli, who had helped draft the accord in Berlin, wrote the Prince of Wales: "I did yesterday something for Greece. It was very difficult, but it is by no means to be despised. It was all done for Her Royal Highness's [Princess Alexandra's] sake. I thought of Marlborough House [residence of the Wales's] all the time, and it was not decided after many efforts until the last moment."²⁵

Theodore Delyannis, who represented Greece at the Congress, recalled eleven years later to General Read:

I tried every means in my power to persuade Lord Beaconsfield [Disraeli], and I twice asked for the aid of the King [of the Hellenes]. His Majesty on both occasions vigourously supported my proposition and his intervention had its effect upon the English Prime Minister in connection with the insistence of Count Andrassy and M. Waddington, and his (Beaconsfield's) consent being obtained, the protocol was adopted by the Congress.²⁶

23. DL, III, 501; Lascaris, *La politique extérieure*, p. 132; Lee, *King Edward*, I, 436-437, 488.

24. Great Britain, *Parliamentary Papers, Greece No. 1* (1879): *Correspondence Respecting the Negotiations for the Rectification of the Greek Frontier* (London, 1879), no. 20; DDF, Series I, II, no. 346, n. 1; Medlicott, *Bismarck, Gladstone*, p. 721; Miller, *Ottoman Empire*, p. 394. See also Lascaris, *La politique extérieure*, pp. 125-147.

25. Lee, *King Edward*, I, 437; Philip Magnus, *King Edward the Seventh* (New York, 1964), p. 154.

26. Read Papers, Rochester, Box. III. Two 1889 interviews with Delyannis are described here in a manuscript by Read entitled, "H. E. Mr. Theodore P. Delyanni[s], Former Prime Minister of Greece, Breakfasts With General Meredith Read, 128 Rue de la Boétie, Paris, Thursday, July 18, and Saturday, July 20, 1889."

Following the close of the Congress, Delyannis went to London. Again years later, he recalled to Read that Salisbury "told me that the Protocol was only an expression of the sentiment of the Congress and that if Turkey did not want to fulfill it England could not coerce her —its execution depended solely on Turkey's good will. If she chose to fulfill it, England would be extremely pleased, but could demand nothing."²⁷ According to Delyannis, however, Gladstone and Sir Charles Dilke, leaders of the Liberal opposition, said that they would speak out for the Greek cause, and promised him that if they got into power, they would bring the protocol's terms to fruition.²⁸

Delyannis also visited Vienna, St. Petersburg, and Rome after the Congress. In all these capitals he received official, though vaguely phrased, promises of support for the implementation of the protocol. Tsar Alexander II, indicating continued irritation over the way Greece had acted during the recent Russo-Turkish war, told him. "You [i. e. Greece] did not move when you ought to have moved and you did move when you ought not to have stirred."²⁹

While he was on his tour, Delyannis reported back his encounters to King George in a cypher known only to the two of them.³⁰ The king, unlike Salisbury, considered that Greece had a formal commitment from the Powers to enlarge her territory; and he once again turned to his brother-in-law, the Prince of Wales, for help. The prince informed him that Britain was doing everything possible to urge the Ottoman government to come to a territorial settlement. In reply the king wrote to the prince on August 30, 1878:

I should be sorry if you thought I had been complaining against England for its attitude in the Congress. I have never said anything like it. I am, on the contrary, very much satisfied with what has been done for Greece, and thankful to England for having accepted and agreed to the proposition made by the French Minister for Foreign Affairs in favor of Greece. If the proposition had been made by the English Plenipotentiaries —and I regret that they did not do it— it would have been of great use and immense effect, because it would have strengthened so much more the feeling of the Greeks that England had taken their future in hand. But I quite understand the delicate position in which England was in at the time *vis-à-vis* of

27. Read Papers, Rochester, Box III, "Delyanni[s] Breakfasts."

28. Read Papers, Rochester, Box III, "Delyanni[s] Breakfasts."

29. Read Papers, Rochester, Box III, "Delyanni[s] Breakfasts." See also Lascaris, *Diplomatike Historia*, p. 169 for Italy's attitude.

30. Read Papers, Rochester, Box III, "Delyanni[s] Breakfasts."

Turkey, and that she preferred, therefore, to let M. Waddington propose the rectification of our frontier to those two rivers, instead of doing it herself. . . Of course the Greeks will be in a ferment as long as Turkey refuses to sanction claims which have received the sanction of Europe.³¹

The prince forwarded this letter to Disraeli on September 9 and asked him to send some encouragement for King George. Disraeli's answer called for patience from the king and his people.³²

Similar sentiments for patience were expressed by the other Powers; for nobody wanted to wage a war on the Ottoman Empire for Greece's sake despite the assurances Delyannis had received from some persons on his tour. Thus Greece, unable to secure effective support for the implementation, of the Thirteenth Protocol and the Treaty of Berlin, found that the Turks would not agree to cede the territory marked out for her by the Congress. In Vienna Andrassy told the Greek minister that Greece would secure this territory only through a war with the Turks; and in Athens the Austrian envoy spoke in the same terms to Prime Minister Coumoundouros. Misconstruing this as an indication that Austria would back Greece in such a war, Coumoundouros in late September, 1878, tried to ascertain what conditions Andrassy believed would be most propitious for the Greeks to attack the Turks. About one month later King George sent a message to the Austrian minister in Athens, Count Dubsky, that Greece was ready to act if she had Austria's pledge not to abandon her at the decisive moment.³³

Such intrigues came to nothing, for Austria did not desire to be involved in a Greek-Turkish war. The Turks meanwhile used one diplomatic means after another to put off any boundary changes. Finally on February 6, 1879, a conference on the boundary question opened at Preveza between Greek and Turkish negotiators. Although the Turkish delegates took up much time discussing the validity of the Congress Protocol, they finally proposed a new boundary which would run parallel to the existing Greek border and would give Greece only a narrow new strip of territory running from the Gulf of Volo to the Aspropotamos River. This was rejected by Greece, and the Preveza meetings ended in failure in March when the Greek delegates withdrew

31. Lee, *King Edward*, I, 489. The Greek-Turkish negotiations about the frontier between July 15 and August 30 are covered in *Greece No. 1* (1879), nos. 23-30.

32. Lee, *King Edward*, I, 489; Tisdall, *Royal Destiny*, pp. 41-42.

33. DL, IV, 10-11.

on the grounds that the offer of the Turks was insufficient. The Greek government then asked the Powers for mediation.³⁴

King George explained Greece's attitude to General Read:

... our commissaries [at Preveza] after having heard this [Turkish] proposition, thanked the turks [sic] for all their kindness and went away the following day. The mediation has therefore now been asked for: Greece asks the Powers to press upon the Porte, in order to force her to cede to Greece that territory, they themselves decided that Greece should have, which they gave Greece the *right* to ask for; they are not asked to judge the question between the two countries, nor to give an arbitrage, but to force the Porte to respect their own signatures. We shall see now what they will do in the matter.³⁵

To the Prince of Wales the king wrote deploring the fact that Britain would not put pressure on the Turks to settle the boundary dispute; and he complained vehemently when he learned that Dirsaeli was considering that the Ottoman Empire might retain Larissa and Janina, which had been designated for Greece by the Congress. In fact the king was so angry at all the Powers for not forcing the Turks that at times he talked of abdicating and at other times he spoke of putting himself at the head of his army to occupy the desired territories.³⁶ Of course, this was bluff, since Greece still did not have enough military strength to risk war with the Ottoman Empire.

The Powers did arrange for Greek-Turkish negotiations over the boundary issue to resume at Constantinople in August, 1879. As was the case at Preveza, matters dragged out; and it was only on November 17 that the Greek delegates were able to propose formally the boundary Greece desired. Briefly, this border ran along the Kalamas and Peneios Rivers and left both Janina and Metzovo to Greece. Needless to say, the Turks proposed an alternate line far to the south of the Greek one, and left these two cities to the Ottoman Empire. After more discussions it became clear that negotiations was impossible, and around the beginning of March, 1880, the Greek delegates were recalled. A few months later the Powers decided that a conference of their

34. *Greece No. 1* (1879), nos. 48-164, 172-175, 184, 185; Miller, *Ottoman Empire*, p. 407; Medlicott, *Bismarck, Gladstone*, p. 77; DL, IV, 20-26, DDF, Series I, II, no. 413.

35. Read Family Papers; The Library Company of Philadelphia: Papers of John Meredith Read II (hereafter cited as Read Family Papers, Philadelphia: Read II), Part 6, Box 9, "General J. M. Read II, 1837-1896, Greek Ministry, 1873-1878," George I to Read, Athens, March 29, 1879.

36. Lee, *King Edward*, I, 489-490; DL, IV, 32.

ambassadors in Berlin should meet to propose a proper rectification of the Greek Turkish frontier.³⁷

During May, 1880, King George began a tour abroad, his first since 1876. In Paris, where he was warmly welcomed by French officials, George inquired what frontier line the French government would support for Greece at the forthcoming Berlin conference of ambassadors, and how far France would go in forcing the Ottoman government to accept the new boundary. Apparently the president of the French Chamber, Gambetta, who was well-disposed to extending Greece as far as possible, promised the king that France would support a border favorable to Greece and would intervene to get it accepted by the Turks.³⁸

In London the King met with members of a Liberal government which had taken office in April. Gladstone, whose assurances to Delyannis just after the Congress of Berlin we have already noted, was now prime minister. An ardent Graecophil, he had recently written a tract, "The Hellenic Factor in the Eastern Problem," supporting Greek expansion at Turkish expense. Sir Charles Dilke, who had also made promises to Delyannis, was the new undersecretary for foreign affairs. In 1879 he had been one of the founders of a group in London known as the Greek Committee, whose main function was to work for Greece's territorial expansion. Lord Granville, the new foreign secretary, and his wife were among Princess Alexandra's best friends; and she seemed in a particularly favorable position to intervene in favor of her Greek brother. Moreover, the Liberal Party in opposition had strongly criticized Disraeli's hesitancy in forcing the Ottoman Empire to cede the territories marked out for Greece.³⁹ "Now we shall see," King George had written to Read from Athens on May 8, "if they [the Liberals] will support the Greek claims and insist upon the complete fulfillment of the Berlin treaty, with the

37. Medlicott, *Bismarck, Gladstone*, pp. 74-84; DL, IV, 32-56; DDF, Series I, II, no. 485, Great Britain, *Parliamentary Papers Greece No. 1* (1880): *Further Correspondence Respecting the Negotiations for the Rectification of the Greek Frontier* (London, 1880), nos. 25, 64, 73, 85 and *passim*; Great Britain, *Parliamentary Papers Greece N. 2* (1880): *Further Correspondence Respecting the Negotiations for the Rectification of the Greek Frontier* (London, 1880), nos. 26, 45.

38. DL, IV, 59-60; DDF, Series I, III, no. 127; Lascaris, *La politique extérieure*, p. 189; Read Family Papers, Philadelphia; Read II, Part 6, Box 9, George I to Read, Athens, May 8, 1880.

39. DL, IV; Lascaris, *Diplomatike Historia*, pp. 167-168; Arthur, *Queen Alexandra* p. 120.

same energy as they did, whilst in opposition. It is always easier to be opposition than the government."⁴⁰

What the king found in London was encouraging. Dilke, who was favorably impressed with George's abilities, worked with him on maps showing details of the proposed new frontier, and even went so far as to talk about the possibility of joining the Albanian sections of the Ottoman Empire to Greece through a personal union. Finding Gladstone and Granville friendly, the king wrote back to his government that these men had said that if France persisted in her favorable dispositions, the Greek aspirations had a good chance of being fulfilled. As before, the Princess of Wales did her best to help her brother by working on her husband. The prince was sympathetic; but when Alexandra spoke to Granville about Greece, he told her simply to have patience.⁴¹

While King George was still on his trip, the conference of ambassadors met at Berlin during the last two weeks of June, 1880, and came to a unanimous decision about the frontier. The ambassadors traced a line which went from Mount Olympus on the Aegean to the mouth of the Kalamas River on the Ionian Sea. Both Janina and Metzovo were included within Greek territory. This decision, which was accepted by the governments of the Powers, was officially announced to Greece and the Ottoman Empire on July 15. The Greek government accepted it immediately because it included practically all the Greek demands; but the Ottoman government rejected it. Since the Powers did not compel the sultan by force to accept the conference line, the rectification of the Greek-Turkish boundary continued unsettled.⁴²

40. Read Family Papers, Philadelphia: Read II, Part 6, Box 9, George I to Read, Athens, May 8, 1880. Read's tour of duty as American representative at Athens had ended in May, 1879; but he remained in close touch with the king. With Read's departure the American mission to Greece was discontinued temporarily, and the legation was not reopened until 1883.

41. DL, IV, 59-60; Stephen Gwynn and Gertrude M. Tuckwell, *The Life of the Rt. Hon. Sir Charles W. Dilke* (2 vols.; New York, 1917), I, 328-329; Arthur, *Queen Alexandra*, pp. 119-120; Lee, *King Edward*, I, 490; Lascaris, *La politique extérieure*, p. 189; *The Political Correspondence of Mr. Gladstone and Lord Granville, 1876-1886*, ed. Agatha Ramm (2 vols.; London, 1962), I, no. 150.

42. Medlicott, *Bismarck, Gladstone*, pp. 97-105; DL, IV, 58-72; Miller, *Ottoman Empire*, pp. 407-408; Great Britain, *Parliamentary Papers, Greece No. 3* (1880): *Correspondence Respecting the Conference at Berlin on the Rectification of the Greek Frontier* (London, 1880), nos. 10, 16, 29, 40, 41, and *passim*; Great Britain, *Parliamentary Papers, Greece No. 1* (1881): *Correspondence Respecting the Rectification of the Greek Frontier* (London, 1881) nos. 101, 103, 120-122.

The prolonged crisis over the boundary had made the Greek government more bellicose. Charilaos Tricoupis, who had become prime minister in March, 1880, was talking about the necessity of Greece's occupying the areas assigned to her; and he said that he would mobilize the country if need be. The king, on the other hand, could see that despite the encouragement he had received in Paris and London, no Great Power wanted a Greek-Turkish war; and he was anxious to avoid any venture which would pit Greece alone against the Ottoman Empire. In early July while visiting Berlin on his way to Copenhagen, George told the French ambassador, Saint-Vallier, that although he hoped Greece would be prudent, it was difficult to restrain the government, which wanted to call out the reserves. He revealed that he telegraphed Tricoupis constantly, but that the prime minister did not listen. The Powers, said the king, ought to stop Tricoupis from calling out the reserves; for this measure would stir the nation to some rash undertaking. He further asked the French government to intervene with Tricoupis, but not to reveal that he had made such a request. To Hohenlohe, whom he also saw in Berlin, the king made a similar request. These appeals were hardly necessary, since the Powers constantly pressed Tricoupis to be very careful.⁴³

The king's secret endeavors to influence Tricoupis could not prevail against the mounting calls among all Greek political parties for a military build-up. From Copenhagen, where he was visiting his Danish relatives, George therefore signed a decree on July 20 for the mobilization of the army; and he authorized the prime minister to publish it when he wished. This Tricoupis did on August 5 after Granville had let him know that England was not opposed.⁴⁴

In the meantime the king had been considering the possibility of paying the Ottoman Empire for the cession of territory to Greece. He told Dilke in June that he could and would pay such a sum if necessary to secure the Berlin frontier. Apparently George was in contact with a group of Greek merchants who with the cooperation of Charles Mallet, president of the Ottoman Bank in Paris, were prepared to pledge a sum of up to £2,500,000 which could be used to indemnify the Turkish government for lands given to Greece. Although Gladstone and Granville discussed this plan into the next spring, they did not

43. DDF, Series I, III, nos. 192, 195, 202; DL, IV, 77ff. For Tricoupis's mobilization plans see *Greece No. 1* (1881), nos. 78, 79, 83, 86, 87, 89, 90, 93-95, 98, 99, 102, 104, 118 123-125, 127, 132, 137.

44. *Greece No. 1* (1881), nos. 144, 161, 173, 177, 182, 185; Lascaris, *La politique extérieure*, p. 90.

press it on the Turks; and thus it proved of no more use in solving the boundary issue than any previous scheme.⁴⁵

Unsuccessful, too, was a plan of Dilke's for an international occupation of Smyrna to force the Turks to give in. Gladstone and Queen Victoria gave their assent to this in principle; but the French government under Jules Ferry, who became prime minister in September, did not want to commit French finances to a blockade or to participate in coercive measures against the sultan just at the moment when France was quietly planning to occupy Tunis. The Ferry government further took the position that the decisions reached on the Greek boundary at the Congress of Berlin and the subsequent conference there were not binding on Greece or the Ottoman Empire. Under these circumstances the British government, which had turned its primary attention to serious problems over Ireland, failed to press for the Dilke plan.⁴⁶

The changes in the French government and the movement of the Irish problem into a critical phase deprived King George of the support of the two countries on whom he had pinned his greatest hopes. He returned to Athens on October 17, having gained no real benefit for Greece during his five month trip. Now he seemed at one with his government on the necessity of arming against the Turks. The mobilization continued under Coumoundouros, who replaced Tricoupis as prime minister in late October; and the king himself urged the Chamber to pay particular attention to bills dealing with the military. By January, 1881, Greece was drifting closer and closer to war with the Ottoman Empire, since there seemed no hope of settlement of the boundary issue.⁴⁷

Then the six Great Powers agreed to submit the Greek-Turkish boundary dispute to a conference of their ambassadors at Constantinople. The ambassadors began their deliberations on February 20, 1881, and continued them into the next month.

On March 23 the Ottoman government, which had previously presented other territorial plans to the conference of ambassadors at Constantinople,

45. *The Political Correspondence of Mr. Gladstone and Lord Granville, 1876-1886*, I nos. 222, 224, 269, 272, 288, 316, 360, 420, 445.

46. Lascaris, *Diplomatike Historia*, pp. 170-171; Lascaris, *La politique extérieure*, pp. 190-196.

47. *Greece No. (1881)*, nos. 201, 211, 215; Great Britain, *Parliamentary Papers, Greece No. 2 (1881): Further Correspondence Respecting the Rectification of the Greek Frontier* (London, 1881), nos. 2-4, 17, 25, 31, 89, 94, 113; Great Britain, *Parliamentary Papers, Greece No. 6 (1881): Correspondence Respecting the Rectification of the Greek Frontier* (London, 1881), nos. 86, 87.

suddenly brought forth a new boundary proposal. This boundary began at the Aegean Sea, ran north of the Peneios River, and then followed the course of the Arta River to its mouth. Hence the greater part of Epirus, including Janina and Metzovo, would remain in the Ottoman Empire, while almost all of Thessaly and a part of Epirus with the town of Arta would be given to Greece. This new boundary fell far short of the recommendations of the Thirteenth Protocol of the Berlin Congress and of the line drawn by the ambassadors at Berlin in June, 1880. Nonetheless the Constantinople ambassadors agreed on March 26 to recommend that the Turkish proposal be accepted by their governments on the conditions that Punta, which was situated across the Gulf of Volo go to Greece, that the fortifications at Punta and Preveza be dismantled, and that the navigation of the Gulf of Volo be free.⁴⁸

What had caused the Ottoman government to drop its procrastinating attitude and to make the boundary offer of March 23, 1881? Quite possibly the assassination in Russia of Alexander II on March 14 and the accession of King George's brother-in-law as Alexander III was the deciding factor for the Turks. George's sister, the new Empress Maria Feodorovna, was said to exert an important influence over her husband; and she, like her sister, Alexandra, the Princess of Wales, was devoted to her Greek brother. The Turks may well have felt that instead of trying to guess how far Alexander III would go in supporting his brother-in-law, they might at least retain most of Epirus by conceding Thessaly.⁴⁹ Besides, the Turkish government must have wondered whether the accession of the Prince of Wales' brother-in-law as tsar might not bring Russia and England together to support Greece. In fact, the Liberal government was already trying to influence Alexander III in Greece's favor. When the Prince of Wales went to St. Petersburg for the funeral of Alexander II, Lord Granville wrote him:

Y. R. H. feels so kindly about Greece that I hope you will recommend the Emperor how much it will affect the position of the King of Greece if the frontier line is settled in a manner not entirely to dissappoint the reasonable expectations of his subjects. Not to mention, apart from any question of amour propre, how much

48. Medlicott, *Bismarck, Gladstone*, pp. 190-235; DL, IV, 91-129; DDF, Series I, III, *passim*.

49. I have found no direct evidence to connect the accession of Alexander III with the Turkish offer of March 23; but it seems to me that the change in attitude of the Turkish government can only be explained in terms of some sudden event which the Turks took into account. Therefore, I think it reasonable to conclude that the Turkish government took into consideration the fact that Alexander III was King George's brother-in-law,

Europe must lose of power for good, if it is made manifest that a slight opposition is sufficient to reverse the decisions which all the Powers have taken. To divide Thessaly between the Turks and the Greeks appears to be a certain way of creating future difficulties.⁵⁰

Neither the British government nor the Russian government was satisfied with the Turkish offer of March 23, even though the ambassadors at Constantinople had accepted it; but neither of them was willing to go to war with the Ottoman Empire to gain any more concessions for Greece. So they joined the other Powers in urging Greece to accept this settlement. Lord Granville on March 29 let the Greek minister at London know that if a war with the Turks came, the Greeks would have to fight it alone. Three days later he instructed the British representative at Athens to make it absolutely clear to the Greek government and to the parliamentary opposition that Britain would not help Greece in such a war. Although the Greek Government on April 2 informed all the Powers that the Turkish offer was insufficient, on the seventh of the month the Powers presented an identic note calling on the Greek government to agree to the boundary as settled by the ambassadors at Constantinople.

In Greece among governmental circles and in the opposition there were strong feelings that the country should press for more concessions from the Turks; and when it appeared that Prime Minister Coumoundouros would reject the note, Tsar Alexander III and the Crown Prince Frederick of Germany intervened to urge King George to accept. The tsar did this despite the tearful entreaties of his wife, the Empress Maria Feodorovna, who wanted to gain more territory for her Greek brother. Though Alexander would have preferred to please the empress, his ministers persuaded him that any further pressure on the Turks would lead to war, something he was not willing to risk. Faced with this kind of anti-war stand, Coumoundouros realized that if he sought further concessions, Greece would stand alone. Therefore on April 12 he replied to the note of April 7 in a deliberately evasive but conciliatory way, which the Powers considered as tantamount to an acceptance. Privately he explained that he had avoided a more explicit reply, lest it lead to internal disturbances in Greece, which was in a state of agitation over the boundary issue. During the next few months the country quieted down and the actual cession was arranged. Greece gained a territory of about 14,000 square kilometers,

50. Lee, *King Edward*, I, 491.

which was a much richer agricultural area than the country had possessed before.⁵¹

Thus ended six years of diplomatic activity in which King George had taken a prominent part. As the advocate of Greek claims before the Great Powers, he had generally followed a policy of pleasing the Powers in order to gain as much as he could for Greece. Even after the Preveza meetings in 1879, when he grumbled about his discontent, and after he gave his full support to a military build-up in late 1880, he was careful not to go so far as to turn the Powers against him. Although his attitude helped bring about the cession of Thessaly and part of Epirus, other areas like Macedonia and the rest of Epirus, for whose inclusion into his kingdom he had also worked, remained Turkish. His endeavors were therefore only partly successful.

That the king's personal diplomacy was even partly successful was the important point. The Prince of Wales and Princess Alexandra's efforts behind the scene did help King George place Greek claims before the Congress of Berlin. Alexandra's influence did help convince Disraeli to espouse the Thirteenth Protocol of the Congress. Though the Turks paid little heed to this protocol, it did help King George keep the question of Greek territorial expansion before the Powers until ultimately a peaceful settlement gave Thessaly and a part of Epirus to Greece at a time when Greece alone could not have forced the Ottoman Empire to concede anything.

Thus there was enough success in George's personal diplomacy for him to continue to look upon his methods as rewarding, and there was enough success for him to consider his endeavors were but a prelude to the future. He and Coumoundouros kept thinking of the lands which the Berlin conference had assigned to Greece, but which had remained in the Ottoman Empire. After the cession of Thessaly and the Epirus areas had been completed, King George said in a speech from the throne: "Thanks to the unanimous actions of the Powers to whom Greece is thankful, the pacific occupation of the annexed territories, *token of a better future*, has been accomplished happily."⁵²

51. Medlicott, *Bismarck, Gladstone*, p. 235-40; DL, IV, 128; *The Political Correspondence of Mr. Gladstone and Lord Granville*, 1876-1886, I, 466; Great Britain, *Parliamentary Papers, Greece No. 3* (1881): *Further Correspondence Respecting the Rectification of the Greek Frontier* (London, 1881), nos. 1-5. The cession of Thessaly is discussed in Count Charles de Moüy, *Souvenirs et causeries d'un diplomate* (Paris, 1909), pp. 151-183.

52. DL, IV, 155.

Privately he continued to seek further concessions for Greece by appealing to his influential royal relatives. Their kind feelings towards him meant that this policy of supplication was one that he would find most useful again and again in the future, as he sought to enlarge his kingdom even more.

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