

Russia and the Reacquisition of Southern Bessarabia, 1875—1878

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I. Introduction

At the beginning of his reign *Alexander II* was compelled to sign a document, the Treaty of Paris, which he henceforth regarded as a deep humiliation to himself and his dynasty. His determination to break the clauses of this agreement became thereafter one of the chief goals of Russian foreign policy.¹⁾ The two sections upon which Russian attention was chiefly directed were, first, that concerning the neutralization of the Black Sea, and, second, articles 20 and 21 which provided for the detachment from Russia of the three Bessarabian districts of Ismail, Cahul and Bolgrad. The first stipulation was the principal gain made by Britain in the Crimean War; the second reflected the Austrian desire that Russia no longer hold territory on the Danube. On repeated

¹⁾ This account is based primarily on the books mentioned in the following footnotes. A general discussion of Rumanian policy in the period can be found in Lilio Cialdea, *La Politica estera della Romania nel quarantennio prebellico*. Bologna 1933, pp.21—119. The *Bălăceanu memoir "Souvenirs politiques et diplomatiques, 1848—1903"* is to be found in the library of the Rumanian Academy of Sciences in Bucharest. The other unpublished documentary material cited here is from the State Archives, Bucharest, from either the Brătianu papers or from the collection "Casa Regală".

The most valuable books for this subject are General R. Rosetti, *Corespondența Generalului Iancu Ghica* [The correspondence of General Iancu Ghika]. Bucharest 1930, which contains the diplomatic correspondence of the Rumanian representative in St. Petersburg, and *Aus dem Leben König Karls von Rumänien*. Stuttgart 1900, volumes III and IV, (cited hereafter as K. K.). The article by E. A. Adamov, *Le Problème bessarabien et les relations russo-roumaines: Le Monde Slave*, 1928, part 1, pp. 63—106, is of interest as an early Soviet attempt to defend the Russian actions. The Rumanian collection *Războiul pentru Independență* [The War for Independence]. Bucharest 1952—1955, nine volumes, has little material on southern Bessarabia. The Russian publication concerning the Bulgarian national movement in this period *Osvozhdenie Bolgarii ot turetskogo iga* (cited hereafter as O.B.T.I.) [The Liberation of Bulgaria from the Turkish Yoke], Moscow 1961/68, 3 vol., contains some documents pertaining to Russo-Rumanian relations and the cession of southern Bessarabia.

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occasions after 1856 *Alexander II* made it clear that he felt it a matter of personal honor that these clauses be annulled and that he hand the Russian empire to his successor in the form in which he himself had received it from his father. In the subsequent major negotiations in which the Russian government was involved, its strong desire to overturn the settlement of 1856 was always apparent. It was also obviously prepared to pay a high price to attain this goal. In 1870 as a consequence of the circumstances surrounding the Franco-Prussian War, Russia was able to denounce unilaterally the Black Sea clauses, an act subsequently approved by an international conference. With this major hindrance to her freedom of action in the east removed, the Russian government felt itself now in a position to exert greater influence in the Balkans and at Constantinople.

The question of southern Bessarabia was a matter of much less international consequence than the neutralization of the Black Sea area. Despite its relative lack of importance in general European affairs, its reacquisition remained one of the first aims of Russian foreign policy. The area in question covered approximately 5,000 square kilometers. Unlike the rest of Bessarabia, this territory was not predominantly Rumanian. Although the Rumanians held a plurality, the three provinces were also populated by Bulgarians, Ukrainians, Jews and Tartars. These districts, together with the rest of Bessarabia, had been acquired by Russia from the Ottoman Empire in 1812. In 1856 they were surrendered again to the Porte, who gave them to Moldavia. After the unification of Moldavia and Wallachia in 1859, they thus became part of the lands of the new Rumanian state. In supporting their rival claims, both Russia and Rumania relied more on historical than on national arguments. The Rumanian government maintained that before 1812 all of Bessarabia had been a possession of Moldavia for centuries; the Russians, whose claims dated only from 1812, nevertheless viewed the territory as a part of the legitimate possessions of the Russian empire.

Because of its position, bordering on the Kilia channel of the Danube and on the Black Sea, southern Bessarabia obviously had great strategic significance, not only for Russia and Rumania, but also for Austria-Hungary. Renewed Russian possession of the area would render the Rumanian frontier more difficult to defend and thus would enable the Russian government to exercise even more influence on Rumanian affairs. The reestablishment of Russia on the Kilia channel would give her a strong position at, if not control of, the mouths of the Danube. Despite these obvious aspects, it is interesting to note that the military and strategic side of the question appears to have concerned *Alexander II* very little. The tsar's dynastic considerations and his feelings of

wounded pride were instead the major motives for subsequent Russian actions.

In the same manner that the Franco-Prussian War allowed Russia to annul the Black Sea clauses of the Treaty of Paris, the Russian government was able to use the eastern crisis of 1875—1878 to take back southern Bessarabia from Rumania. The Russian intention was made clear in the first negotiations which took place between the powers on the problems raised by the revolt in Bosnia-Hercegovina in 1875. Since the Bessarabian lands had been transferred in an international treaty, it was of first importance that the Russian government gain the acquiescence of at least a majority of the powers signatory to the treaty of 1856. Rumania, still a vassal state of the Ottoman Empire, could obviously not withstand Russian pressure without strong support from abroad. Moreover, the Rumanian position on treaty rights had been weakened by the events of the previous years. The unification of Moldavia and Wallachia and the election of a foreign prince had been themselves acts in violation not only of the Treaty of Paris, but of other international agreements.

The chief negotiations on the question of Bessarabia were carried on by *A. M. Gorchakov*, the foreign minister, *D. A. Miliutin*, the minister of war, *N. P. Ignatiev*, the ambassador in Constantinople, *A. I. Nelidov*, who served in the Russian embassy under *Ignatiev*, but who became head of the diplomatic chancellery of the Grand Duke *Nicholas* in 1877, *E. P. Novikov*, the ambassador in Vienna, and *P. A. Shuvalov*, the ambassador in London. Although these men had differing opinions on the major diplomatic questions of the day, it appears that the majority did not share the tsar's extreme eagerness to reacquire the three districts. *Ignatiev*, almost alone, regarded this as a major question of Russian honor and prestige. All of these statesmen, however, recognised and respected *Alexander's* uncompromising attitude and his firm determination to obtain the lands. Since in matters of foreign policy, *Alexander II* did exercise his autocratic powers, it was his wishes which guided Russian action, and it is he who was thus responsible for the ultimate effects of Russian actions on foreign relations.

As a first step towards recovering the area, the Russian government turned to its partners in the Three Emperors' Alliance, Germany and Austria-Hungary, to secure their approval. These negotiations were, of course, part of the general discussions between the three courts on the problem of Bosnia-Hercegovina. The German position from the beginning was clear and affirmative; it was to remain essentially unchanged through the Congress of Berlin. *Bismarck*, primarily concerned with averting a war between his allies over the eastern question, consistently stood for a policy of partition in Balkan affairs.

He wished Austria-Hungary to acquire Bosnia and Hercegovina and to be recognised as the predominant power in the western half of the peninsula; Russia was to take southern Bessarabia and receive a similar sphere of control in the eastern half of the Balkans. Throughout the eastern crisis *Bismarck* continued to urge his allies to agree upon some such division of influence.

The Austrian reaction was more complex. Count *Julius Andrassy*, the foreign minister, backed by a section of public opinion, particularly in Hungary, was basically opposed to the acquisition of more territory inhabited by Slavs. A further partition of the Ottoman Empire, unless it were inevitable, was thus not favored. *Andrassy* was ultimately to accept a territorial deal involving a trade of Bosnia-Hercegovina for southern Bessarabia because he feared that if the monarchy did not annex the Slavic provinces, they might fall to Serbia and Montenegro. He feared the strengthening of these states and their ultimate influence on the South Slav inhabitants of his own country. In contrast to the foreign minister, others within the empire, notably *Franz Joseph* and certain military circles, approved a policy of cooperation with Russia and an advance in the Balkans. They desired to annex Bosnia-Hercegovina as a hinterland to Dalmatia, and they were willing to allow Russia proportionate gains in other sections of the peninsula. The exchange of the Russian reacquisition of southern Bessarabia, along with a reorganization of the Ottoman Christian provinces, for Habsburg domination in Bosnia, or Bosnia and Hercegovina, was acceptable to all groups if it appeared that the Ottoman Empire in Europe was indeed on the brink of complete collapse.

Although Austria had been chiefly responsible for the Russian loss of the Bessarabian districts in 1856, her fundamental position had now changed. In 1876 the Habsburg Monarchy was an ally of Russia. The question of the control of the Danube never became a major issue in the discussions largely because Russia did not claim the Delta and because the river was now under the control of an international commission, in which Russia, even though again a riverain power, would not have a predominating position. The Russian proposals for Bessarabia in fact gave the Habsburg statesmen a convenient bargaining point. The tsar's strong feelings meant that Austria could trade its assent for a high compensation.

The support of Russia's allies for her claims to southern Bessarabia was affirmed in a series of agreements preceding the outbreak of the Russo-Turkish War in April, 1877. In a meeting held at Berlin in May, 1876 it was agreed that if the Ottoman Empire should collapse, Russia would take southern Bessarabia, Austria-Hungary part of Bosnia. Arrangements were also made for the disposition of the other ter-

ritories. At the Reichstadt meeting of July, 1876, although there was subsequent disagreement about the arrangements concerning Bosnia and Hercegovina, Russia was clearly allowed to "resume her frontiers of 1856". In the Budapest Convention, signed on the eve of the war, Russia again received the assent of her ally to retake the lands.

Although the eastern crisis of the late 1870s involved primarily problems surrounding the revolt of the Christian populations of Bosnia-Hercegovina and the resultant international complications, the Russian government throughout its negotiations with the great powers showed itself consistently concerned with reserving for itself two rewards which had nothing to do with the major issues under discussion — the acquisition of southern Bessarabia and also the port of Batum with its surrounding territories. During these years of intense crisis, these remained the two areas over whose fate the Russian government would accept no compromise; in all other matters Russian policy retained a large degree of flexibility.²⁾ The question of Batum involved primarily British³⁾, not Austrian, interests; it was part of the Reichstadt agreement, but not of the later Budapest pact. Bessarabia, in contrast, was a matter which concerned directly Russia's relations with Austria-Hungary.

II. Russia and Rumania

By the fall of 1876 it was thus obvious that should Russia go to war with the Ottoman Empire, southern Bessarabia would be among the prizes of victory which would be claimed. Austria-Hungary would receive compensation in Bosnia — even at the ultimate cost of those same South Slavs in whose fate the Russian government and public were showing such great concern. The problem remained, however, of dealing with the Rumanians — the titular possessors of the territory in question — and this difficulty was not so easily met. Although Rumania was according to the public law of Europe still a part of the Ottoman Empire, she enjoyed a condition of almost complete autonomy.

²⁾ In the negotiations before the Congress of Berlin it became clear that the issues on which Russia would probably be willing to risk a war with the European great powers were the Asiatic territories of Batum and Kars, southern Bessarabia and the granting of a port to Montenegro. See the documents on the Anglo-Russian agreement of May, 1878 in B. H. Sumner, *Russia and the Balkans, 1870—1880*. Oxford 1937, pp. 637—651.

³⁾ This article on southern Bessarabia is designed as a companion to another, "Britain and the Russian Acquisition of Batum, 1878—1886" which is published in the *Slavonic Review* Juli, 1969 (London). Together these studies cover the two major gains of Russia at the Congress of Berlin and are intended to illustrate certain aspects of the personal diplomacy of *Alexander II*.

Ottoman rule was more an annoyance and a humiliation than a limitation on her political freedom of action. In fact, Rumanian interests were threatened more by her Christian neighbors, Russia and Austria-Hungary, than by the suzerain power. Rumanian possession of southern Bessarabia had, as has been mentioned, been gained through an international agreement. Should Russia openly demand the territory and should Rumania appeal to Europe for protection against the Russian claims, a real diplomatic crisis could occur. Even more important, should Russia wage war against the Porte, she needed at least the passive acquiescence of the Rumanian government to the passage of Russian armies through the land. Since the Russian desire to reacquire Bessarabia was generally known and was certainly an ever-present fear of the Rumanian leaders of all factions, the question was bound to arise in any negotiations between Russia and Rumania over military cooperation against the Ottoman Empire. The simplest solution for the Russian government, of course, would have been to persuade the Rumanians to accept a bargain and to exchange Bessarabia for some other territory. This is the course, in fact, which the Russian statesmen repeatedly attempted to follow. They wished through unilateral negotiations to obtain Rumanian agreement and then, if necessary, to secure great power approval. The stubborn Rumanian refusal caught the Russian diplomats in a most difficult dilemma. They needed Rumanian cooperation in any military advance against the Ottoman Empire, but they also wanted a part of Rumania's territory. If they admitted that they desired the second, they would not obtain the first.

From September, 1876 to January, 1878, when the Rumanians were finally told bluntly that they would have to give up the territory, the Russians tried to get around the issue by hints, ambiguous remarks, evasions, by "speaking academically" and by indirect offers of large compensation. *Gorchakov, Nelidov, Ignatiev* and the tsar were principally involved in these attempts. On this question, as on others during the eastern crisis, the Russian leaders were divided on how the Rumanians should be handled. Nevertheless, in the months before January, 1878 the Rumanian government was never directly, openly and officially informed, as was the Austrian, German and British, that the Russians would take Bessarabia should they defeat the Ottoman Empire. Although there is disagreement over the details of the negotiations in this period, it is clear that the Russian government continually tried to find a means to gain Rumanian agreement to the surrender of the land; the Rumanians, in contrast, sought assurances to the contrary. A deadlock was inevitable. The same pride and obstinancy which led *Alexander II* to insist upon the territory for personal and dynastic reasons made it impossible for the Rumanian political

leaders to agree to a bargain on the matter. The tsar regarded Bessarabia as part of his legitimate possessions; the Rumanians saw it as their national heritage.

The principal negotiations on possible Russian and Rumanian military cooperation and on the Bessarabian question took place at Livadia in September, 1876 between *Ion Brătianu*, the Rumanian premier, and *Gorchakov*, *Ignatiev* and the tsar; in Bucharest in December, 1876 between *Brătianu*, *Nelidov* and *Stuart*, the Russian consul-general; and until the outbreak of the war in April, 1877 between *Brătianu* and *Stuart* in the Rumanian capital. During the war and immediately afterwards a very important role was played by General *Iancu Ghika*, who was the Rumanian representative in St. Petersburg both before and after the war and who was attached to the Russian army headquarters during the campaign. On the Rumanian side the real burden of the negotiations fell upon *Brătianu*, *Mihail Kogălniceanu*, who was foreign minister during most of the period under discussion, and Prince *Charles*. Until January, 1878, as will be seen, the Russian diplomats were relatively circumspect in their handling of the Rumanian representatives, largely because they needed Rumanian assistance against the Ottoman Empire. Thereafter, although still to an extent dependent on Rumanian good will, they adopted a sharp and threatening tone toward Bucharest.

In their dealings with the Rumanian leaders, the Russian diplomats did not have the benefit of a long historical tradition of consistently good relations. The unique position of the Rumanians in the Ottoman Empire and the fact that they enjoyed a position approaching independence meant that they did not need outside protection against a despotic overlord. Moreover, after the last successful Russian crusade against the Ottoman Empire in 1828—1829 the Russians had established a highly unpopular protectorate over the Rumanian principalities, which was terminated only in 1856. The Rumanians thus tended to regard the Russians not as liberators, but as potential dangers to their autonomy. They could also not be expected to be wholly enthusiastic about the course of events after 1875. Like the Austrians, they looked with apprehension at the prospect of the establishment of strong Slavic states. Although sympathetic with the plight of the Christians subject to direct Ottoman rule, they, like the Greeks, were also aware of the possible consequences of a growth in power of the Slavic Balkan states. Russian cooperation and assistance were thus not regarded in the same light in Bucharest as in Belgrade, Cetinje and among the Bulgarians.

On their side, the Russian diplomats had few sentimental associations with the Rumanians despite their past deep involvement in the country and the many personal and family ties which existed between

individuals in both nations.⁴⁾ They tended to regard Rumanian political life as corrupt and anarchical. The conservative Russian statesmen also did not like what they regarded as the extremely radical nature of much of Rumanian internal politics.⁵⁾ In August, 1876 a Liberal government under *Ion Brătianu* came to power, which, with certain changes in personnel, was to remain in office, with only one interruption, for twelve years. Although certain members of the Liberal party, such as *Kogălniceanu* and *C. A. Rosetti*, were in favor of cooperation with Russia, this group, the heirs of the revolutionary principles of 1848, remained suspect in many Russian eyes. Moreover, *Brătianu* had been the Rumanian statesman principally responsible for the election of *Charles of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen* as prince of Rumania, an act which had been opposed by Russia.

In the first years of the eastern crisis the Rumanian government as a vassal of the Ottoman Empire had adopted an attitude of neutrality, a condition which was satisfactory to Russia, who feared the international complications should Rumania undertake a more active role in the events.⁶⁾ Volunteers, but not arms, were allowed to cross the country from Russia to Serbia. During this period the Rumanians of all political parties were well aware of both the dangers and the possibilities of their position. They hoped that the rising in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Serbo-Montenegrin conflict with the Porte would not lead to a general war involving other powers. If it did, they preferred that it would be in the form of a European action against the Ottoman Empire. If Russia alone should go to war, they wished it to be only with the assent and under the control of the other great powers — that is, with a European mandate. Their principal concern was that

⁴⁾ It is interesting to note that both *Gorchakov* and one of his chief assistants, *N. K. Giers*, had *Moldavian* wives and much experience with Rumanian affairs. *Gorchakov's* consistently snappish tone in dealing with the Rumanian representatives is not to be explained by any lack of knowledge of the country, but more by the fact that the Russian foreign minister had met with repeated setbacks in his relations with Bucharest, particularly after 1859. See *Raoul Bossey*, *La diplomatie russe et l'union des principautés roumaines (1858—1859): Revue d'histoire diplomatique*, III, 1962, pp. 255—266.

⁵⁾ For the internal as well as the foreign policy of these years see *Richard V. Burks*, *Romania and the Balkan Crisis of 1875—78: Journal of Central European Affairs*, II, July 1942, pp. 119—134, and October 1942, pp. 310—320.

⁶⁾ *Giers* told *Ghika* that "une attitude pacifique et la plus stricte neutralité devaut toujours être la sauvegarde de la Roumanie, à qui sa position géographique permet et à qui ses intérêts vitaux commandent de rester étrangère aux troubles qui agitent la rive droite du Danube." *Ghika* report of May 12/24, 1876 from St. Petersburg. *Nicolae Iorga*, *Correspondance diplomatique roumaine sous le Roi Charles I^{er}*. Bucharest 1938, pp. 173, 174.

a unilateral Russian action would result in the reestablishment of Russian domination in their country.

There were, however, definite advantages which could be won by Rumania from the general situation. The Porte was now under strong pressure; perhaps the opportunity had come to throw off the last vestiges of Ottoman control. Prince *Charles* in particular wished to be the sovereign of an independent state, not a vassal prince under the sultan. Moreover, Rumania had certain territorial objectives which were under Ottoman rule, in particular, the Danube Delta and Dobrudja. In negotiating with Rumania, the Russian diplomats were thus dealing with a country which was deeply suspicious of Russian intentions, but which also wished to exploit the international situation to its own advantage.

In the fall of 1876, when the danger of a conflict with the Ottoman Empire became more acute, it became essential for the Russian government to know the attitude of the Rumanians in a future Russo-Turkish war; indirect inquiries were thus sent to Bucharest. Desirous of more information on the general situation, Prince *Charles* decided to send a deputation, consisting of *Brătianu*, *Slăniceanu*, the minister of war, and two others, to Livadia.⁷⁾ There *Brătianu* spoke with the tsar, *Miliutin*, *Gorchakov*, *Ignatiev* and the other Russian statesmen principally concerned with the eastern crisis. From the meager Russian reports on these conversations, it would appear that, from the Russian viewpoint at least, all went very well indeed. *A. G. Jomini*, who was *Gorchakov's* assistant, wrote to *N. K. Giers*, who was in St. Petersburg in charge of the administration of the foreign ministry: "Les Roumains sont très bien — (si sincères). Ils offrent d'être notre avant-garde moyennant compensations: indépendance, royauté — annexion Dobroudja jusqu'à Kustendje [Constanța]."⁸⁾ The offer to be the "advance guard" was also made to *Ignatiev*.⁹⁾ From the Rumanian standpoint the results of the meeting did not appear in so favorable a light, although *Brătianu* was impressed by his friendly reception. The chief Russian objective in the conversations was to obtain from the Rumanian government a military agreement which would allow the passage of Russian armies through the country to the Danube. The Rumanian statesmen for their part were willing to consider an agreement, but they insisted that any pact between the two governments must have

⁷⁾ For a description of the Livadia meeting from the Rumanian standpoint see Appendix and also G. I. Brătianu, *Le Problème des frontières russo-roumaines pendant la guerre de 1877—1878 et au congrès de Berlin*. Bucharest 1928, pp. 39—49. See also O.B.T.I., I, pp. 439, 440, 443.

⁸⁾ *Jomini* to *Giers*, no date, Charles and Barbara Jelavich, *Russia in the East, 1876—1880*. Leiden 1959, p. 30.

⁹⁾ D. A. Miliutin, *Dnevnik [Dairy]*. Moscow 1949, II, p. 92.

a formal political character. Such an arrangement would place the Rumanian government on an equal footing with the Russian and would also provide guarantees against a possible Russian seizure of Bessarabia. In his discussions with *Brătianu*, *Gorchakov* now adopted the harsh and rude tone which he was to maintain thereafter. He told *Brătianu* that if the Russian conditions were not accepted, Russia would treat Rumania simply as part of the Ottoman Empire and force passage. This threat gave the Rumanian minister the opportunity to declare: „daß Rußland einen Krieg zur Befreiung seiner Christenbrüder aus dem Joche der Ungläubigen nicht eben glücklich mit der Niederwerfung einer christlichen Armee beginnen würde . . .“¹⁰⁾

For the Rumanian representatives the question of the Russian intentions in regard to southern Bessarabia was, of course, of first importance. *Brătianu* at this time bluntly and directly asked *Gorchakov* if Russia intended to take the region. The Russian minister coyly replied that he would like his answer to be „guessed“ (*deviné*). Later *Brătianu* remarked to *Gorchakov* that he “guessed” that the Russians wished to retake the territory. *Gorchakov* replied: “What! Aren't there treaties?” *Ignatiev*, although not admitting the Russian intentions, was a stage more direct. He asked why Rumania was so insistent about Bessarabia: “que la Russie n'avait point de frontières du côté de la Roumanie, et qu'il serait facile de donner à celle-ci de larges compensations.” *Brătianu* replied “que c'était la Roumanie qui avait besoin d'avoir des frontières pour se défendre, tandis que le grand empire russe n'avait certainement pas à craindre d'être envahi par la Roumanie.”¹¹⁾ The tsar's approach to the problem is described by *Bălăceanu*, the Rumanian representative in Vienna, to whom *Brătianu* confided his experiences:

“ . . . après le dîner, le tsar et la tsarine amenèrent Bratiano, pour prendre le café, dans un endroit du parc où ils restèrent seuls. Le tsar sortit un cigare de sa poche, l'offrit à Bratiano, tandis que l'Impératrice, frottant une allumette lui offrit du feu, forçant ainsi Bratiano à allumer son cigare. Alexandre II posa, alors, la question de la façon suivante: Ce n'est pas au point de vue du territoire que la question est importante, car la Russie en possède assez, mais au point de vue du Tsar, il y avait là une question de principe. C'était la première fois, depuis que la Russie existait, qu'elle était obligé de céder une partie, fut-ce même une parcelle, d'un territoire qu'elle avait conquis par ses armes. A ce titre Alexandre II considérait

¹⁰⁾ K. K., III, pp. 62, 63.

¹¹⁾ See Appendix.

comme un devoir pieux envers son père de rendre à la Russie de Nicolas I ce que le traité de Paris lui avait fait perdre."

Brătianu did not attempt to answer the tsar.¹²⁾

At Livadia the Russian leaders had thus made clear their desire for a military agreement with Rumania. They had also discussed the Bessarabian question, but they had certainly not declared their intention of taking the territory in the same open manner which characterized their conversations with Austria-Hungary and Germany. Although *Brătianu* had avoided direct answers on the main issues, the Russian government evidently gained the impression that it would meet with no great difficulties in Bucharest. *Brătianu*, in contrast, returned home deeply disquieted. He had certainly received disturbing hints concerning the future Russian policy toward Bessarabia and war was obviously in preparation. Moreover, the signature of any kind of an agreement with Russia would signify a reversal of the previous Rumanian policy of neutrality. Despite these considerations both Prince *Charles* and *Brătianu* favored the negotiation of an agreement, but they wished it to have a political character and to contain definite guarantees for Rumania.¹³⁾ At the same time, the hope remained that a Russian-Turkish war could be avoided.

In October war preparations in Russia advanced to the stage where it was necessary to conclude a precise agreement with Rumania regulating the passage of troops. Preliminary soundings in Bucharest showed that *Brătianu's* views had apparently altered since the Livadia conversations.¹⁴⁾ In strong disagreement with some of his colleagues on matters of policy, *Gorchakov* now sought to disassociate himself from the negotiations with Rumania and to make them a purely military concern. *Miliutin* nevertheless insisted upon the diplomatic nature of the proceedings. He proposed that *Nelidov* be sent from Constantinople by way of Odessa to Bucharest. There he was to negotiate an understanding. Instructions on military matters were to come from the war ministry; the diplomatic aspects would be handled by the foreign ministry.¹⁵⁾ Acting according to this plan, *Nelidov* arrived in Bucharest in December in strict incognito, accompanied only by Prince *Michael Cantacuzène*, a Rumanian in Russian service. Discussions were conducted in great secrecy, usually with *Brătianu* alone. The Rumanian foreign minister, *Ionescu*, who had replaced *Kogălniceanu* and who supported a policy of neutrality, was not informed of the negotiations.

¹²⁾ *Bălăceanu memoir*, p. 133.

¹³⁾ K. K., III, p. 77.

¹⁴⁾ *Miliutin*, *Dnevnik*, II, pp. 102, 112.

¹⁵⁾ *Ibid.*, II, p. 104.

Nelidov was also not received by Prince *Charles*. The visit remained a secret to the Rumanian press, public and the leading statesmen.¹⁶⁾

Although with inadequate instructions on the form to be followed in drawing up a military convention, *Nelidov* was able to formulate suitable provisions regulating the passage of the Russian army through Rumania. The diplomatic side of the negotiations was, in contrast, a more difficult matter. *Nelidov* came with categorical instructions to avoid discussions in this sphere. *Brătianu*, with Bessarabia directly in mind, insisted on political guarantees, maintaining that they were absolutely essential for domestic considerations. Prince *Charles* was equally determined; he wished the treaty to guarantee the territorial integrity of the country so that there would be no question about Bessarabia. *Nelidov*, well aware of the issues involved and the Russian position, argued against the Rumanian proposals to the best of his ability. He claimed that an article containing territorial guarantees "faisait injure à la Russie" and that "les Russes avaient assez d'une Pologne." At one point, *Brătianu* later told *Bălăceanu*, *Nelidov* burst into tears, declaring: "C'est . . . parce que vous ne croyez pas à la bonne fois de mon gouvernement, et celà me désole!"¹⁷⁾ *Nelidov* further argued that Russia could not agree to protect Rumania against all eventualities. For instance, should Rumania attack Austria-Hungary over Transylvania, Russia could not give assistance. *Brătianu* tried during these conversations by every means possible to obtain a franker declaration of Russian intentions. At one point he inquired what compensation Rumania would receive should Russia take Bessarabia, at another about the possibility of a partition of Rumania between Russia and Austria. *Nelidov* worked diligently during this time to find a treaty formula which would calm Rumanian anxieties, but which would not completely limit Russian action.¹⁸⁾

¹⁶⁾ The most complete account of these negotiations is given in A. I. *Nelidov*, *Souvenirs d'avant et d'après la guerre de 1877—1878: Revue des deux mondes*, XXVIII, July, 1915, pp. 244—254. See also K. K., III, pp. 76—85 and *Miliutin*, *Dnevnik*, II, p. 113. Material on the question of Russo-Rumanian military cooperation can be found in O.B.T.I., I, pp. 623, 626, 627, 629, 636.

¹⁷⁾ *Bălăceanu memoir*, p. 127.

¹⁸⁾ *Adamov* quotes a *Gorchakov* report on these negotiations for a convention as follows: "... le gouvernement roumain envoya une députation à Votre Majesté à Livadia. M. Bratiano qui en était le chef nous fit des propositions directes de coopération, nous demandant seulement de promettre de garantir l'indépendance et l'intégrité de la Roumanie. Il craignait visiblement qu'en cas de guerre, la Russie ne s'emparât de la partie de la Bessarabie cédée en 1856. L'éventualité de commencer les opérations militaires, que nous devions alors prévoir, nous obligeait à aller au devant de cette proposition. Sans nous lier par aucune promesse formelle que nous ne fussions certains de tenir, nous nous bornâmes à assurer Bratiano qu'on maintiendrait l'intégrité de son pays, comme sa situation politique telle qu'elle avait été garantie par le traité. Nous

By November 26/December 9 a draft convention was drawn up, but *Nelidov* found that despite the previous discussions *Brătianu* still hesitated to sign.¹⁹⁾ Opinion within Rumania remained deeply divided on the question of cooperation with Russia. Nor was the international situation clear. The Constantinople Conference, during which the great powers again sought a solution to the Balkan crisis, was in progress. Both Prince *Charles* and *Brătianu* were reluctant to commit their country for the moment. Meanwhile alternate possibilities and courses of action were explored. Until the final signature of the agreement with Russia, negotiations were carried on with the Ottoman Empire to attempt to settle some of the differences with that power. Advice was also sought at Vienna and Berlin. *Andrassy*, loyal to the policy of cooperation with Russia, declared that Austria would not regard a Russian entrance into Rumania as a *casus belli*. He, however, advised that Rumania not enter a war on the side of Russia. If Russian troops passed through the country, the Rumanian forces should withdraw into Little Wallachia.²⁰⁾ *Bismarck*, giving stronger support to the Russian position, advised the acceptance of a treaty and a greater degree of concurrence with Russian wishes.²¹⁾

The Russian negotiations with Rumania were aided by events in Constantinople. In December the Porte issued a constitution whose terms were regarded by the Rumanian government as an infringement on their rights within the empire. In January 1877 the Constantinople Conference ended in failure. War between Russia and the Porte was now closer than ever. The Russian government continued to press for the signature of the agreement. In their dealings with Bucharest, the Russian diplomats had the advantages of the situation on their side. It was quite clear that no great power was going to go to war with Russia in defense of Rumanian neutrality; it was also obvious that the Rumanian army alone could not defend the country. If resistance were offered to a Russian passage, the Rumanian government might find the Russian and Turkish armies fighting on their territory. It must be remembered that at this time the Russians sought only an agreement regulating the passage of their troops; they did not ask for military assistance.

ne lui demandions qu'une convention militaire, destinée à régulariser le passage de nos troupes. Nous ajoutions que, si les événements amenaient des modifications politiques ou territoriales en Turquie, nous ne nous opposerions pas à l'indépendance de la Roumanie, et que le territoire de la principauté ne subirait aucune réduction qui ne fût compensée par une annexion d'égale importance." *A d a m o v*, *Le problème bessarabien*, pp. 98, 99.

¹⁹⁾ A copy of this original draft is not available. See *Nelidov's* comments, *Nelidov*, *Souvenirs*, XXVIII, pp. 252, 253.

²⁰⁾ *K. K.*, III, p. 81.

²¹⁾ *K. K.*, III, p. 86.

Despite these considerations, *Brătianu* continued to avoid a decision, although Prince *Charles* now supported a policy of cooperation. In order to stall proceedings further, *Brătianu* made additional demands on the Russian government. The Rumanian economic position was indeed critical; if war were to come the country needed more military equipment. The Rumanian minister therefore requested money, arms, horses, torpedoes and other military supplies. He also insisted that the Russians pay in gold for the costs of the passage of their armies. Since the Russian economic position was itself precarious, and since they had no great surplus of supplies themselves, the Russians were reluctant to agree to these demands.²²⁾

The protracted negotiations had the advantage for the Rumanians that they won time; the Russians, in contrast, could not afford further delays. In January, Grand Duke *Nicholas*, who was in command of the Russian army, sent a letter to *Charles* through *Stuart*. Here he repeated the request for a purely military agreement "exempte de tout caractère politique".²³⁾ *Charles* remained firm; he now did not want to sign a pact until war had actually begun. On March 30/April 11 the tsar named April 12/24 as the day for the commencement of hostilities.²⁴⁾ The conclusion of the treaty was now a critical matter for Russia. Within Rumania the question of the alignment with Russia remained a subject of debate and disagreement. Of the leading politicians only *Rosetti* and *Kogălniceanu* were enthusiastic about a policy of cooperation. Prince *Charles*, intensely realistic, saw that an agreement would have to be made once war began. He hoped that Rumania would gain its independence as a result of a Russian victory. He believed that Europe would not allow Russia to reestablish a protectorate over Rumania, even if Russian troops were stationed in the country.

It is interesting to note that during the debates on the Russian alignment, *Brătianu* made very categorical statements concerning Bessarabia. In the senate on March 15/27 in answer to a specific question on the negotiations with St. Petersburg, he stated:

„ . . . on n'a parlé nulle part de la Bessarabie, et non par des hommes de notre foi, mais par d'autres personnes nous avons les assurances les plus positives et d'une façon affirmative — je ne dis pas officielles — qu'on n'a parlé nulle part, ni à Berlin, ni à Constantinople, ni à Vienne, ni à Pétersbourg, ni à Londres, du retour de la Bessarabie à la Russie et que la Russie n'a pas soulevé cet incident."²⁵⁾
The negotiations continued until virtually the outbreak of the war.

²²⁾ K. K., III, pp. 80, 116; *Miliutin*, *Dnevnik*, II, pp. 114, 115, 132.

²³⁾ K. K., III, p. 98, 99.

²⁴⁾ *Miliutin*, *Dnevnik*, II, p. 153.

²⁵⁾ *N. Iorga*, *Histoire des Roumains et de la Romanité orientale*. Bucharest 1945, X, pp. 207.

On March 16/28 *Ionescu*, who continued to support a policy of neutrality, resigned. The final agreement was thus signed by *Kogălniceanu*, who was once again foreign minister. Under extreme pressure, the Russian government at the last minute accepted the Rumanian insistence that the word "actuelle" be inserted in the last sentence of the second article of the agreement. Baron *Stuart* telegraphed this demand to St. Petersburg, and he was authorized to make the change. The convention was finally signed on April 4/16 by *Stuart* and *Kogălniceanu*.²⁶⁾ Article 2 directly concerned Bessarabia; through it the Rumanian government hoped that it had secured itself against a future loss of territory.

"Article II. Afin qu'aucun inconvénient ou danger ne résulte pour la Roumanie du fait du passage des troupes russes sur son territoire, le gouvernement de Sa Majesté l'Empereur de toutes les Russies s'engage à maintenir et à faire respecter les droits politiques de l'Etat Roumain, tels qu'ils résultent des lois intérieures et traités existants, ainsi qu'à maintenir et à défendre l'intégrité actuelle de la Roumanie."²⁷⁾

At the time of the negotiating of the treaty the Rumanian government had been assured that Russian troops would not enter the country until the parliament had ratified the treaty. Meanwhile, however, the deadline for the Russian attack on the Ottoman Empire, April 12/24, was quickly approaching. One day before the event, April 11/23, the Rumanians were informed that war would commence the next day.²⁸⁾ *Kogălniceanu* immediately protested. On the insistence of Prince *Charles*, *Stuart* took the train to Kishinev, the Russian headquarters. There Grand Duke *Nicholas*, *Miliutin* and others discussed the problem, but rejected a postponement because of the general military situation.²⁹⁾ On April 12/24 the Russian army thus crossed the frontier in the face of Rumanian protests. Relations became even worse when the Russian command put up posters with a proclamation addressed to the Rumanian people. The prince and his ministers regarded this action as an affront; all such declarations should have been made by the prince.³⁰⁾ Although the Rumanian authorities were well satisfied with the conduct of the Russian troops, friction continued among the higher authorities. The Rumanian government complained that the Russian

²⁶⁾ *Nelidov* in his memoirs expressed his disapproval of the action: "Je m'étais évertué en vain d'épargner à mon pays cette humiliation." *Nelidov*, *Souvenirs*, XXVIII, p. 254.

²⁷⁾ *Démètre A. Sturdza*, *Charles I^{er}: Roi de Roumanie*. Bucharest 1899, II, p. 551.

²⁸⁾ *Kogălniceanu* to *Ghika*, cypher telegram, Bucharest, April 11/23, 1877. *Rosetti*, op. cit., pp. 35, 36.

²⁹⁾ *Miliutin*, *Dnevnik*, II, pp. 155, 156.

³⁰⁾ *K. K.*, III, p. 132.

officers apparently were not aware of the agreement and acted as if a convention did not exist. Finally, on April 16/28 and 17/29, with Russian troops well established on Rumanian soil, the chamber and the senate approved the treaty.

The ratification of the treaty and the entrance of Russian troops into the country did not, of course, signify that Rumania was at war with the Ottoman Empire. However, once hostilities commenced, the role of Rumania in the conflict in the future naturally came into question. Again Rumanian opinion was divided. *Kogălniceanu* wished to await the reaction of the powers; *Charles* and *Brătianu* favored an active policy.³¹⁾ A similar disagreement existed on the Russian side. *Gorchakov* strongly opposed active military cooperation with Rumania; Grand Duke *Nicholas* and the military leaders, in contrast, were eager to make use of the Rumanian army, which, although small, was in excellent condition.

In pursuance of this question General *Ghika*, the Rumanian representative in St. Petersburg, sought an interview with *Gorchakov*. He wished to discuss two matters of pressing importance for Rumania — the securing of a loan and the question of military cooperation. His request for five million francs, as could be expected, did not meet with a very enthusiastic reception, although he was eventually able to secure a lesser amount. The second matter also received little encouragement. *Gorchakov* stated flatly:

"Sa Majesté m'a chargé de vous faire savoir qu'elle ne tient pas à la coopération de la Roumanie et qu'elle ne l'y engage pas. Si malgré cela le Gouvernement Roumain se décide à faire la guerre aux Turcs et ordonne à son armée de passer le Danube la Roumanie n'a qu'à pourvoir aux frais et dépenses de la campagne entreprise."³²⁾

Later a similar reply was sent directly to Bucharest.³³⁾

A differing point of view was, however, expressed at the Russian army headquarters. In May *Charles* visited Grand Duke *Nicholas* at Ploesti. Here the Russian commander urged Rumanian participation in the war, and he showed his clear annoyance at the interference of the foreign ministry in the matter.³⁴⁾ Although the Grand Duke did welcome Rumanian cooperation, it was obvious that he expected it to assume a form which was at first unacceptable to the prince. *Charles* at this time wished his army to play a definite and independent role in any military operation; he also intended to retain command over his troops. The Russian leaders instead wanted Rumanian soldiers

³¹⁾ K. K., III, p. 141.

³²⁾ *Ghika to Kogălniceanu*, St. Petersburg, May 9/21, 1877. Rosetti, op. cit., p. 75.

³³⁾ K. K., III, pp. 167—169.

³⁴⁾ K. K., III, pp. 153, 154.

primarily for the less glorious tasks of garrison duty and the guarding of prisoners; they also wanted the Rumanian forces to be placed under Russian command. The prince, as could be expected, refused these conditions.

Despite the discouraging Russian attitude, the Rumanian statesmen and public were soon filled with an increasing war fever and a desire to make gains from the situation. The Turkish bombardment of Rumanian cities was used to justify a final break with the Ottoman Empire. On May 9/21 the chambers voted for a declaration of national independence. Although the move was greeted with great enthusiasm within the country, it received a negative reception abroad. The Russian government too did not approve the action. *Charles*, now regarding himself as an independent sovereign, was even more eager to lead his armies into battle. The Prussian prince believed that "nur auf dem Schlachtfelde die Unabhängigkeit des Landes besiegelt werden könne."³⁵⁾

Throughout the early summer relations between Russia and Rumania remained much the same. *Charles* pressed for a full participation of the Rumanian army under his leadership; the Russians wished only to make use of certain Rumanian troops at their own convenience. If *Charles* wished to enter the war, he would have to place his forces under Russian command. In June the prince visited the Russian headquarters at Ploești. Again *Gorchakov* discouraged Rumanian military cooperation; Rumania, he maintained, could gain the recognition of her independence without fighting. At this time he also spoke of the Russian interest in the mouths of the Danube and in securing the Kilia arm. This action would, of course, involve southern Bessarabia. *Gorchakov* spoke in the same manner in a subsequent conversation with *Kogălniceanu*.³⁶⁾ Thus two months after the signing of the treaty the Russian foreign minister was in fact discussing its violation. During this visit the prince also spoke with Grand Duke *Nicholas*, who expressed his disagreement with *Gorchakov* on the question of Rumanian participation and his opinion that the foreign ministry was mixing too much in matters which did not concern it.³⁷⁾

³⁵⁾ K. K., III, p. 179.

³⁶⁾ *Kogălniceanu* explained his past policy in a secret meeting of the Rumanian parliament on January 23/February 4, 1878. Notes of *D. Sturdza*, Brătianu archive, doc. 165/1876—1878, State Archives, Bucharest.

³⁷⁾ K. K., III, pp. 178, 179. *Ignatiev* too favored Rumanian participation because he believed it would allow Russia to take southern Bessarabia with greater ease. He told *Gorchakov*: "The Turks, I said, probably will defeat our allies or place them in a critical position; then we will come to their assistance, save their army and we can demand in compensation that the part of Bessarabia which is inhabited primarily by Russians and Bulgars be added to Russia. Otherwise, that is, without this direct assistance,

When the Russian army first entered Rumania, its commanders had expected a short and glorious war against the Ottoman Empire. Their rejection of Rumanian and Serbian aid had been based on the calculation that Russian manpower was sufficient and that the small Balkan states would cause more difficulties than their participation was worth.³⁸⁾ The Russian expectations were rudely upset when at the end of July a major defeat was suffered at Plevna. Suddenly Rumanian assistance became of the utmost importance; a real military disaster threatened. Under these circumstances *Brătianu* favored coming to the aid of the Russians; *Charles*, more cautious, at first preferred to wait until clear assurances were given of Rumania's role in the coming battles.³⁹⁾ Discussions were thus continued on the place of the Rumanian army in the Russian military plans. At last on August 16/28 the tsar offered *Charles* the command of the military operations at Plevna.⁴⁰⁾ The opportunity was too flattering for the *Hohenzollern* prince to refuse; he thereafter abandoned his previous demand for independent action. It should be noted that he also did not use the opportunity afforded by the Russian embarrassment to gain precise advantages for his country in any future peace negotiations.

Rumanian prestige and morale were now at a high point. Rumanian independence had been declared, and it appeared that the Rumanian armies were "saving" the Russian forces. In September an ill-advised assault was launched against Plevna. Although it proved another military disaster, the Rumanian troops won the single victory with the capture of the Grivița redoubt. In this hour of Russian need, relations between the governments remained good. The prince got along well with the tsar and, especially, with General *Totleben*, who had been called to organize the investiture of Plevna. *Charles* as a

rendered by us to Rumania, it would be awkward to seize territory from our allies at the end of the war and it would make it very difficult to satisfy them territorially without damage to our interests." *Gorchakov* considered this plan "Machiavellian". N. P. Ignatiev, *Zapiski* [Notes]: *Istoricheski Vestnik*, CXXXVII, July, 1914, pp. 70—71.

³⁸⁾ A common Russian opinion on the value of the Balkan allies was expressed by *A. F. Hamburger*, an assistant to *Gorchakov*: "... mais à mon humble avis, tous ces misérables alliés nous coûtent beaucoup d'argent et on a déjà eu suffisamment de preuves de ce qu'ils peuvent fournir... Quels services nous a rendus jusqu'ici la Roumanie?" *Hamburger* to *Giers*, Bielo, July 28/August 9, 1877. Jelavich, *Russia in the East*, p. 165.

³⁹⁾ K. K., III, pp. 212, 213.

⁴⁰⁾ K. K., III, pp. 237, 238. *Jomini* commented: "Ici on a enfin fini par donner aux Roumains les satisfactions d'amour-propre dont ils avaient besoin... Il faut espérer qu'on réussira à faire marcher les choses en mettant de côté la brutalité nationale! Autrement cela pourrait devenir très dangereux. La fable du Lion et du Moucheron ne devrait pas être perdue de vue." *Jomini* to *Giers*, August 21, 1877. Jelavich, *Russia in the East*, p. 58.

German prince, a *Hohenzollern*, and a relative of *Alexander's* had a high standing in the Russian court. It was hoped that the tsar's apparent affection for him would bring gains for Rumania.⁴¹⁾

During the next months, before the fall of Plevna, the Rumanian representatives sought to obtain from the Russian officials some idea of what they would receive in the future peace. *Charles* and *Brătianu* wished to secure Russian agreement to a Rumanian occupation of certain cities on the right bank of the Danube; these would be held until the Ottoman Empire had paid a large war indemnity.⁴²⁾ Rumania was also to be allowed to take part in any peace negotiations with the Porte. In November *Brătianu* discussed these matters with both the tsar and *Miliutin*. As usual in his conversations with the Rumanians the tsar avoided any definite commitments. He would only give the assurance that Rumania would not regret having entered the war, a phrase which was to become the standard Russian answer to Rumanian requests for definite information in the next weeks. *Brătianu's* conversations with *Miliutin* were more extensive, but scarcely more revealing. The Rumanian minister mentioned the Rumanian desire to occupy Nikopol, Rakhovo, Lom Palanka and Vidin, and the Russian opposition to it. He emphasized the necessity of a Russian declaration on what Rumania would gain from the war; parliament was about to open and this information was needed for domestic reasons. The question of Bessarabia was then raised. *Miliutin*, cautiously, and speaking "academically", repeated the Russian arguments justifying the return of the area to Russia. He said that the loss of the lands in 1856 had been deeply felt by every Russian and that the present war must result in an alteration of the status of the territory. *Brătianu* replied that he did not object personally to the return of the region, whose population was not predominantly Rumanian, but that the majority of his countrymen would feel differently. The Russian demands would lead to bad relations between the countries; certainly the strengthening of Russian ties with the Balkan Christian populations was more important than this piece of land. At this time *Brătianu* also spoke with *Gorchakov* who had remained in Bucharest during the campaign. The Russian chancellor admitted: "Oui . . . l'Empereur veut la Bessarabie. C'est une sottise, mais il la veut."⁴³⁾

Meanwhile, the Rumanian opposition newspapers were openly writing that Russia would ask for the return of Bessarabia. Certainly,

⁴¹⁾ K. K., III, pp. 173, 174, 323, 358, 359; also *Ghika* to his wife, Poradim, November 14/26, 1877. *Rosetti*, op. cit., p. 115.

⁴²⁾ K. K., III, pp. 337, 469.

⁴³⁾ For the conversations held at this time see Appendix, and *Miliutin*, *Dnevnik*, II, pp. 238, 239 and K. K. III, p. 337.

clear indication had been given of what could be expected. Yet it is interesting to note that none of the Rumanian leaders were willing to introduce the subject in a direct conversation with the tsar, although they well knew that he would decide the matter. *Charles* "hält es nach seinen Beziehungen zu den russischen Machthabern für unmöglich, daß ihm eine solche Forderung gestellt würde."⁴⁴⁾ The prince throughout this period apparently continued to hope that the tsar his friend and supporter, would not break the agreement which had been made. When *Brătianu* came to Poradim in November, General *Ghika*, who was attached to the Russian headquarters, advised strongly against any discussion of Bessarabia with *Alexander II*.⁴⁵⁾

After the fall of Plevna on November 28/December 10 Rumanian military activities remained almost solely restricted to participation in the assault on Vidin and later garrison duty in the area. Rumanian troops thus did not join in the crossing of the Balkan Mountains and the march to the outskirts of Constantinople. With the weakening of the Ottoman armies, the cooperation of Rumania became of less importance. The Rumanian diplomatic position suffered proportionately. In December *Charles* and *Brătianu* spoke with the tsar, who was now about to return to St. Petersburg. Again *Alexander* refused to discuss specific peace terms, repeating only the formula that Rumania would not regret having entered the war. On the question of participation in the peace negotiations, he referred only to Rumania's dubious legal position; no power had recognised her declaration of independence.⁴⁶⁾ It was thus apparent that Russia intended to make peace with the Ottoman Empire, not only without the cooperation of her Balkan allies, but, more significant, even without consultation with the European great powers. The fate of Bessarabia was now to be determined by direct negotiations between Russia and the Porte despite the Rumanian participation in the war and the agreement of April 4/16.

Even with these discouraging signs the Rumanian government persisted in its attempts to take part in the armistice discussions. Colonel *Arion* was therefore sent to the Russian military headquarters which were now at Kazanlik. He took with him the list of the Rumanian objectives; these included the occupation of the Danubian cities and the land in between, the dismantling of the Turkish fortifications on the Danube, the Rumanian acquisition of the mouths of the Danube, including the St. George channel, and an indemnity of 100,000,000 francs. The cities were to be held only until this amount had been

⁴⁴⁾ K. K. III, p. 354, 469, 470. *Charles*, it appears, never spoke with the tsar on Bessarabia.

⁴⁵⁾ See Appendix.

⁴⁶⁾ K. K., III, pp. 379, 380 and Appendix.

paid.⁴⁷⁾ When the telegram announcing the sending of *Arion* arrived in Kazanlik, *Nelidov* replied that the Rumanian demands should be sent directly to St. Petersburg.⁴⁸⁾ Later Grand Duke *Nicholas* sent a similar message to Bucharest.⁴⁹⁾

With the failure of the Russian government to define the terms of the future peace, with its obvious refusal to accept Rumanian cooperation, or even to request a statement of Rumanian desires, the prince and his ministers became increasingly alarmed. *Charles*, as before, clung stubbornly to the hope that the cooperation in the war and his previously cordial relations with the tsar would prevent the surrender of Bessarabia.⁵⁰⁾ Nevertheless, it was decided that an attempt should be made to obtain support from abroad. *Kogălniceanu* now instructed *Callimachi-Catargiu*, the Rumanian representative in Paris and London, to get in touch with the Turkish ambassador in Paris to see if the Porte would not recognise Rumanian independence.⁵¹⁾ Russia could not then require that the Ottoman Empire surrender a piece of territory that was no longer under its jurisdiction. At the same time *Ion Ghika* was sent to London and *Câmpineanu* to Berlin to ascertain if an attitude of resistance would be backed by any of the powers.

By January 14/26, 1878 the Russian government finally decided to stop presenting the Bessarabian issue by the back door; it now bluntly informed the Rumanians that they would have to give up the territory.⁵²⁾ It had previously been agreed that *Ignatiev* would be sent to Bucharest to try further measures of persuasion.⁵³⁾ Russian interests would be better served if the Rumanians would accept the transfer willingly and not insist on making an international issue of it. In St. Petersburg *Gorchakov* and *Alexander II* presented the decision in clear

⁴⁷⁾ K. K., III, pp. 436—438.

⁴⁸⁾ K. K., III, pp. 444, 445.

⁴⁹⁾ K. K., III, pp. 446, 447; *Kogălniceanu* to *Ghika*, Bucharest, January 12/24, 1877. *Rosetti*, op. cit., p. 125.

⁵⁰⁾ K. K., III, pp. 438, 439. On January 6/18, 1878. *Charles* sent a letter to the tsar reminding him of his "généreuses assurances qui gardent pour mon pays une valeur plus haute, une portée plus élevée que les traités les plus formels." K. K., III, p. 443.

⁵¹⁾ K. K., III, p. 446.

⁵²⁾ *Miliutin* commented in his diary: "Prince Gorchakov has finally come to recognise the necessity of making categorical declarations to the Rumanians. Too bad that it is rather late." *Miliutin*, *Dnevnik*, III, p. 14. At the beginning of January the Rumanian government received other indications of the Russian attitude. In a conversation with *Callimachi-Catargiu* in Paris, Prince *Orlov*, the Russian ambassador, commented that Russia was tied to the region of Ismail, because of the glorious battles which had been fought there and that at the Congress of Paris the loss of this land had been more difficult than the destruction of the Black Sea fleet. He emphasized how important the solution of this question was to the tsar. K. K. III, pp. 450, 451.

⁵³⁾ *Miliutin*, *Dnevnik*, III, pp. 10, 12; *Ghika* to *Kogălniceanu*, St. Petersburg, January 14/26, 1878. *Rosetti*, op. cit., p. 128.

and direct terms to General *Ghika*, who had returned as the Rumanian representative. Russia, he was now told, would take Bessarabia to the Kilia channel; in return, Rumania would receive the Danube Delta and a part of Dobrudja, including Constanța. The arguments were used that southern Bessarabia had been ceded to Moldavia, not Rumania, in a treaty which no one respected any longer, that it was unjust that Russia alone should be compelled to honor it, and that "cette revendication est pour elle une question d'honneur et de dignité nationale". In another conversation *Gorchakov* disposed of Article 2 of the April convention by declaring that it engaged Russia "à défendre et à garantir les droits de la Roumanie et l'intégrité de son territoire contre la Turquie seulement"⁵⁴⁾ — thus not against Russian claims. In reply to the Russian declarations, *Ghika* answered that the territory was "un lambeau de notre corps, une possession à nous ab antiquo"⁵⁵⁾ In reporting these conversations to his government, *Ghika* wrote that he considered the Russian decision unchangeable and that the Russian government preferred that the matter be settled directly between Bucharest and St. Petersburg. During these same discussions the Russian diplomats declared that they would represent Rumanian interests in the peace negotiations; Rumanian independence had not been recognised so her direct participation was impossible. Strong objections were also made to the visit of *Ion Ghika* to London.

As could be expected, the Russian declarations caused a strong reaction in Bucharest. *Kogălniceanu* wrote an impassioned despatch to *Ghika*:

"... c'est indigne d'un Grand Empire que de tromper ainsi un pays qui a tout livré aux seules assurances que la parole d'un Empereur vaut plus qu'un traité. Si on avait envie de dépouiller les Roumains d'une partie de leur patrimoine il aurait été loyal de leur le dire avant la conclusion de la Convention du 4 avril, avant que nous passions le Danube, avant que nous sauvions l'armée Impériale et peut-être l'Empereur à Plevna... Donc mieux valait laisser les Turcs devenir victorieux, car eux certainement en cas de victoire ne nous auriens pris beaucoup de la Bessarabie."⁵⁶⁾

In later instructions to *Ghika*, *Kogălniceanu* complained that the Russians treated Rumania like a conquered province and that "jamais les Bulgares n'ont été traité par les Turcs comme les autorités russes traitent les Roumains des villes et villages du Danubes..."⁵⁷⁾ *Kogălniceanu*

⁵⁴⁾ *Ghika* to *Kogălniceanu*, St. Petersburg, March 1/13, 1878. *Rosetti*, op. cit., p. 161.

⁵⁵⁾ *Ghika* to *Kogălniceanu*, St. Petersburg, January 14/26, 1878, *Rosetti*, op. cit. p. 128.

⁵⁶⁾ *Kogălniceanu* to *Ghika*, Bucharest, January 14/26, 1878. *Rosetti*, op. cit., p. 129.

⁵⁷⁾ *Kogălniceanu* to *Ghika*, Bucharest, January 18/30, 1878. *Rosetti*, op. cit., pp. 133, 134.

niceanu also told *Ghika* to ascertain exactly what boundaries Rumania would receive in Dobrudja and to secure further information on the possibility of an indemnity.

On January 19/31 *Ignatiev* arrived in Bucharest intent upon gaining Rumanian agreement to the exchange. He informed the prince that *Alexander II* was personally determined to take the territory; *Charles* refused to believe that the initiative came from the tsar.⁵⁸⁾ The *Ignatiev* mission failed; the Rumanian attitude remained firm. *Charles* from his conversations with the Russian envoy gained the impression "daß dieser nicht immer innerhalb der Grenzen der Thatsächlichkeit sich bewegt, sondern öfters seiner Phantasie die Zügel schießen läßt."⁵⁹⁾

The prince and his government soon learned that their defiance of Russia would receive no support from abroad. Both *Câmpineanu* and *Callimachi* reported the indifference of the powers.⁶⁰⁾ Strong backing for resistance to the Russian demands was, however, received from the Rumanian parliament and public. On January 22/February 3 the Russian armistice terms were announced; the Rumanian loss of Bessarabia was now in the open. On January 28/February 9 the chambers voted a motion opposing the cession.⁶¹⁾ The strong language used during the debates and the unanimity of Rumanian opinion bound the hands of the Rumanian ministers. Thereafter it would have been very difficult for the king or the Liberal government to have made a bargain with the Russian government which would have included the acceptance of the cession of Bessarabia.

Despite the outward appearance of unity a split had actually developed among the ministers. Already by the end of January *Kogălniceanu* had come to believe that public opinion would have to be prepared to accept the loss of the territory.⁶²⁾ *Brătianu*, in contrast, took a stronger stand; by the beginning of March he was of the opinion that *Kogălniceanu*, the signer of the April treaty, should be removed from office to calm public opinion. After the failure over Bessarabia,

⁵⁸⁾ K. K., III, pp. 456—458. *Jomini* at this time also wrote a letter of advice to *Kogălniceanu*. H. Sutherland Edwards, Sir William White, London 1902, pp. 145, 146.

⁵⁹⁾ K. K., III, p. 458. A despatch of February 4/16 of *Stuart* to *Gorchakov*, quoted by *Adamov*, gives another result to this meeting: "Le comte Ignatiev a eu l'amabilité de m'informer que sa proposition avait été couronnée d'un succès complet. Au début, le prince Charles l'a écouté avec un mécontentement visible et lui a même dit quelques mots de refus... mais il a fini par charger son gouvernement de préparer l'opinion publique et les représentants de la nation à ce sacrifice inévitable." *Adamov*, Le problème bessarabien, p. 103.

⁶⁰⁾ K. K., III, pp. 459—462.

⁶¹⁾ The text of the resolution is in K. K., III, pp. 467, 468.

⁶²⁾ K. K., III, p. 458. It will be noted that despite *Kogălniceanu's* personal attitude, the Rumanian notes sent under his name to the powers on the Bessarabian question are strong.

he believed that the foreign minister could not continue in office.⁶³⁾ The division between the two leading Rumanian statesmen lasted through the Congress of Berlin. Faced with this disagreement between his ministers, *Charles* gradually also became convinced that the surrender of Bessarabia was unavoidable. He feared that the press campaign which was going on in Rumania would only anger the Russians.⁶⁴⁾ He could not, however, be expected to advocate openly any course of action which was so unpopular with the public that his own position as prince would be endangered.

After the signing of the armistice agreement, relations between Russia and Rumania remained much the same. *Gorchakov* continued to employ a threatening tone. He declared that the vote in the chamber was an insult to Russia.⁶⁵⁾ The signature of the Treaty of San Stefano on February 19/March 3 added further difficulties. Its terms were not learned by the Rumanian government until March 7/19 when *Ghika* read them in the *Journal de St. Pétersbourg*.⁶⁶⁾ The establishment of a large Bulgarian state, accomplished by this agreement, not only upset the Balkan balance of power, but it caused other complications for Rumania.⁶⁷⁾ In the treaty it was stipulated that Russia would occupy Bulgaria for two years and that military communications through Rumania would be maintained for this period. No Rumanian government could accept such a proposal.⁶⁸⁾ The fears were too strong that under these conditions Rumania would fall under the complete political domination of her large neighbor. To meet the new situation *Brătianu* on March 19/31 started out on a tour of the European capitals to seek support.⁶⁹⁾

The question of military passage now joined that of southern Bessarabia as an object of recrimination and dispute between the Russian and Rumanian governments. On February 28/March 12 *Gorchakov* complained to *Ghika* that Rumania was forcing Russia before the judgment of Europe. The tsar, the chancellor emphasized, was determined to take Bessarabia. He did not wish to submit the question to a congress, but to negotiate directly with Rumania. If the Rumanians

⁶³⁾ K. K., III, p. 501, IV, p. 9.

⁶⁴⁾ K. K., IV, p. 4.

⁶⁵⁾ *Ghika* to *Kogălniceanu*, St. Petersburg, January 29/February 10, 1878. *Rosetti*, op. cit., p. 141, 142.

⁶⁶⁾ *Ghika* to *Kogălniceanu*, St. Petersburg, March 7/19, 1878. *Rosetti*, op. cit., p. 166; K. K., IV, p. 9.

⁶⁷⁾ The official Rumanian reaction can be found in the *Kogălniceanu* circular of March 25/April 5, 1878. *Iorga*, *Correspondance diplomatique*, pp. 334—343.

⁶⁸⁾ *Kogălniceanu* to *Ghika*, Bucharest, March 23/April 4, 1878. *Rosetti*, op. cit., pp. 176—178.

⁶⁹⁾ K. K., IV, p. 13, 15.

refused an accomodation, "nous vous prendrons le territoire demandé et vous n'aurez aucune compensation. Que ferez-vous? Nous opposer par les armes? Ce serait inutile and dangereux pour vous."⁷⁰⁾

On March 20/April 1 *Gorchakov* spoke in even stronger terms. He asked *Ghika* if Rumania truly intended to protest the article of the treaty concerning the passage of troops. The tsar, he declared, "a perdu toute patience et il m'a chargé de vous dire pour le faire savoir à votre gouvernement que si vous avez l'intention de protester ou de vous opposer à l'article mentionné, il fera occuper la Roumanie et désarmer l'armée."⁷¹⁾ Both *Giers* and *Jomini* were present at this meeting.

These conversations marked the height of the tension between the two governments; *Gorchakov* had gone too far. The Rumanian government immediately circulated full accounts of these interviews to the other capitals and they complicated the negotiations which were being carried on simultaneously with other powers. The statement that *Gorchakov* would not submit the question of Bessarabia to a congress contradicted assurances that the Russian government had given that all questions would be discussed. The prospect of a Russian occupation of Rumania involved Austrian interests; obviously the Dual Monarchy would not allow complete Russian dominance in the country. Denials were later issued that *Gorchakov* had indeed said that the Bessarabian question would not be discussed, but by then the harm had been done.⁷²⁾ Thereafter another tone was adopted toward Rumania. Both the Rumanians and the Russians were now aware of the dangers in their positions; both became more circumspect in their mutual dealings.

Meanwhile the international situation remained in a state of crisis. With the possibility that Russia might find herself involved in war with Britain and Austria, the position of her troops in Rumania became again a matter of grave importance. And indeed the Russian military position was dangerous. The bulk of the army engaged in the Turkish campaign lay camped outside of Constantinople. The British fleet had entered the Straits in February. If war broke out between Russia and Britain, or against Britain and Austria-Hungary, the Russian armies in the Balkans could be cut off by a combined Austrian-Rumanian

⁷⁰⁾ *Ghika* to *Kogălniceanu*, St. Petersburg, February 28/March 12, 1878. *Rosetti*, op. cit., pp. 160, 161.

⁷¹⁾ *Ghika* to *Kogălniceanu*, St. Petersburg, March 20/April 1, 1878. *Rosetti*, op. cit., pp. 171—173. *Kogălniceanu* instructed *Ghika* to reply to this threat that "une armée qui a combattu à Plevna sous les yeux de l'Empereur Alexandre II pourra bien être écrasée et tuée, mais qu'elle ne se laissera jamais désarmer." *Kogălniceanu* to *Ghika*, Bucharest, March 21/April 2, 1878. *Rosetti*, op. cit., p. 174.

⁷²⁾ *Ghika* to *Kogălniceanu*, St. Petersburg, March 29/April 10, 1878. *Rosetti*, op. cit., pp. 184, 185.

action.⁷³⁾ The British and Turkish fleets dominated the seas so communication with Russia by this means was not possible. Under these circumstances the Russian government was forced to adopt a less bellicose attitude toward Bucharest. A new military convention was now deemed necessary⁷⁴⁾; wisdom dictated an improvement of relations with the Rumanian government.

Two approaches were thus adopted, one of force and one of conciliation. First, the Russian military position in Rumania was strengthened; troops were placed in such a manner as to encircle Bucharest. Of course, the deployment of Russian soldiers was designed not only to deal with the Rumanian problem, but also to meet a possible action on the part of Austria-Hungary. The Rumanian troops were similarly regrouped. *Charles* planned to withdraw into Little Wallachia if necessary.⁷⁵⁾ Second, the Russian officials became more conciliatory in their relations with the Rumanians. *Gorchakov*, now ill, was not given the opportunity to deliver any more belligerent declarations. On March 29/April 10 *Giers* discussed a new military convention with *Ghika*; in this conversation the Russian diplomat requested the Rumanians to declare what they wanted.⁷⁶⁾ On March 31/April 11 *Stuart* delivered a similar message in Bucharest.⁷⁷⁾

Most important was the exchange of communications which now took place between the tsar and Prince *Charles*. Throughout the crisis the Russian government had tried to maintain the fiction that it was not the prince, but his ministers who were resisting Russian demands.⁷⁸⁾

⁷³⁾ *Ghika* to *Kogălniceanu*, St. Petersburg, March 22/April 3, 1878. *Rosetti*, op. cit., pp. 175, 176. *Nelidov* commented also on the difficult Russian position: "... [Rumania] que nous avons gratuitement blessée et rendue hostile et qui, à la première difficulté se mettraient incontestablement du côté de nos ennemis, et sur notre flanc droit, donnant les mains aux Roumains, l'Autriche." *Nelidov*, *Souvenirs*, XXX, November, 1915, pp. 248, 249. See also *Miliutin* to Grand Duke *Nicholas*, February 27/March 11, 1878. O.B.T.I., III, pp. 29—31.

⁷⁴⁾ K. K., IV, p. 5.

⁷⁵⁾ Russian and Rumanian troop movements are reported throughout this period in K. K., IV, pp. 25—52. Also *Kogălniceanu* to *Ghika*, Bucharest, March 30/April 11, 1878. *Rosetti*, op. cit., p. 187.

⁷⁶⁾ *Ghika* to *Kogălniceanu*, St. Petersburg, March 29/April 10, 1878. *Rosetti*, op. cit., p. 181. *Miliutin* on March 27/April 8 wrote in his diary that *Gorchakov* refused to have anything to do with the new military convention; it was to be the task of the military. It was thus decided that General *Bobrikov* would take the responsibility. *Miliutin*, *Dnevnik*, III, p. 37.

⁷⁷⁾ K. K., IV, p. 23.

⁷⁸⁾ The tsar may very well have been under the impression that *Charles* had been given some kind of semi-official notification. Prince *Alexander of Battenberg*, the brother-in-law of the tsar, wrote *Charles* on April 11/23 that *Alexander II* „wollte nicht zugeben, daß Ihr nicht von vornherein gewußt hättet, daß Rußland Bessarabien auf alle Fälle nehmen würde." K. K., IV, p. 36. On a letter of *Kogălniceanu's* of February 2/14,

This attitude was expressed by the tsar in a message received on March 27/April 8.⁷⁹⁾ Here he thanked the prince for his letter of congratulations on the Treaty of San Stefano, which had been sent as a necessary and routine act of courtesy between rulers. *Alexander II* assured *Charles* of his feelings for himself and Princess *Elizabeth* "mais je ne puis que regretter les allures des personnes qui sont à la tête de votre gouvernement et qui ont créé des rapports si tendus, tout à fait en contradiction avec les véritables intérêts de la Roumanie." In a letter of April 1/13 the tsar again expressed his sympathy for the prince and his wife and declared that "les relations pénibles créés par la procédés de Vos ministres ne sauraient l'altérer. Je regrette d'avoir dû leur faire pressentir les mesures éventuelles auxquelles leur manière d'agir pourrait m'obliger."⁸⁰⁾ In this letter the tsar also called for a new agreement on the passage of troops.

By this time it was clear that the fate of Bessarabia would hinge not on the negotiations between Rumania and Russia, but on the general course of world events. On March 31/April 12 *Brătianu* returned from his trip abroad empty handed. It was obvious that no power would, if peace were maintained, stand with Rumania against Russia over the Bessarabian issue. Only if a general European war broke out, and if Russia were defeated, could Rumania expect to keep the territory. As the possibilities for peace rose, the Rumanian hopes for Bessarabia dimmed. Nevertheless no change was made in the official Rumanian position. *Brătianu*, as head of the government, continued to place his hopes on the submission of the question to a conference of the powers; he still refused to consider a bilateral bargain with Russia. The fate of Bessarabia was thus finally decided at the Congress of Berlin in June. Rumania was admitted to this meeting only as an observer, not as a full member. As could be expected, the final decision here was reached by the great powers, not on the basis of the issues in the case, but according to the principles of the balance of power and of mutual compensation.

III. Russia and Europe: the Congress of Berlin

The collapse of Rumanian hopes of foreign support paralleled the evolution in international relations toward a peaceful European settlement of the problems raised by the Treaty of San Stefano. During the war the Russian government had remained in touch with London,

1878 in which the Russian failure to give prior notification to Rumania was mentioned, the tsar commented: "Mensonge effronté. Bratiano me l'a entendu dire plus d'une fois." *A d a m o v*, *Le problème bessarabien*, p. 103.

⁷⁹⁾ *K. K.*, IV, pp. 20, 21.

⁸⁰⁾ *K. K.*, IV, pp. 27, 28.

Berlin and Vienna. Before the outbreak of hostilities and immediately afterwards the great powers principally concerned had made their wishes known. In the Budapest Convention of January and March, 1877 the Habsburg government had obtained Russian agreement that military operations would not be carried on in Bosnia, Hercegovina, Serbia or Montenegro; the area most important to Austria-Hungary had thus been delimited. On April 24/May 6 the British government in a note to St. Petersburg made a similar declaration of its areas of interest: the Suez Canal, Egypt, the Persian Gulf and the Straits.⁸¹⁾ On May 18/30 the Russian government accepted this statement, except as it regarded the city of Constantinople. In addition, a summary of the Russian views on the future peace was also communicated to London. Here the Russian intention of annexing southern Bessarabia and of allowing Rumania as compensation Dobrudja and independence was affirmed.⁸²⁾ This message was also communicated to Vienna and Berlin. On May 17/29 Austria sent a note, similar to that of Great Britain, stating what Russian actions would not be acceptable. As regards Rumania, it was emphasized that this state should not be incorporated into Russia, or made a dependency. Bessarabia had, of course, already been surrendered to Russia in both the Reichstadt and the Budapest agreements.⁸³⁾

From May until December, 1877, when Plevna finally fell, attention was centered on the conduct of the war, not on possible conditions of peace. When victory finally appeared in sight, Russian desires rose. At Poradim in the beginning of December the tsar approved a program for peace which went considerably beyond that foreseen in previous discussions between the powers. Most significant was the proposal to create a large Bulgarian state to be occupied for two years by Russian troops. The creation of a large Slavic state, obviously under Russian domination, threatened both Austrian and British interests and was in disagreement with the previous accords with Austria-Hungary.⁸⁴⁾ The Treaty of San Stefano, signed in March, provided for the establishment of this Bulgarian state, allowed acquisitions to the other Balkan nations from Ottoman territory and gave direct compensation to Russia in the form of the annexation of territories in Asia Minor as well as southern Bessarabia.

⁸¹⁾ George Hoover Rupp, *A Wavering Friendship; Russia and Austria, 1876—1878*. Harvard 1941, p. 371.

⁸²⁾ *Ibid.*, p. 379, and *Gorchakov to Shuvalov, réservé*, St. Petersburg, May 18/30, 1877. O.B.T.I., II, pp. 83—87.

⁸³⁾ Rupp, *op. cit.*, p. 391, 392.

⁸⁴⁾ The Poradim proposals are to be found in Rupp, *op. cit.*, pp. 421, 422 and O.B.T.I., II, pp. 339—341.

Although both Austria-Hungary and Britain opposed this settlement, their interests were not identical. The British government placed first emphasis on securing a modification of the clauses of the peace which affected its imperial interests. It was thus primarily concerned with the Russian intention to acquire Batum and the surrounding territories and with the status of the Straits and Constantinople. The British foreign minister, Lord *Salisbury*, expected Austria-Hungary to take the responsibility for any questions regarding Rumanian affairs; southern Bessarabia was obviously not a matter of vital national interest for Great Britain. On March 9/21 the British cabinet issued a statement of its position. Included in it was a declaration on the question of Bessarabia.

"The restoration of Bessarabia to Russia, and the control thus given to Russia over the Danube, are serious departures from the Treaty of Paris, and are in themselves open to grave objections. These matters, however, concern primarily Austria and Rumania, and our policy should be rather to support them in such objections as they will make than to originate objections of our own."⁸⁵⁾

The Rumanian resistance to Russia, of course, strengthened the British position. As long as there was a chance that war might erupt, the British government was most circumspect in its attitude toward the Rumanians. The British representative in Bucharest, Sir *Edward White*, was instructed: "Of course, you will do all you properly can to encourage the plucky attitude of Rumania."⁸⁶⁾ However, clearly no major British interests were involved comparable to those at Batum, the Straits or the big Bulgaria. As one diplomat wrote: "... Europe is not likely to go to war for the sake of saving Rumania from being plundered by her ally."⁸⁷⁾

During May *Salisbury* and *Shuvalov* carried on a series of conversations which resulted in the agreement of May 18/30. In these negotiations the Russian determination to acquire Bessarabia was again shown. In this settlement the British government accepted the annexation in terms very similar to those previously quoted:

"Le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté Britannique croirait devoir constater son profond regret pour le cas où la Russie insisterait définitivement sur la rétrocession de la Bessarabie. Comme il est cependant suffisamment établi que les autres Signataires du Traité de Paris ne sont pas prêts à soutenir par les armes la délimitation de la Roumanie stipulée dans ce Traité, l'Angleterre ne se trouve

⁸⁵⁾ Harold Temperley and Lillian M. Pearson, *Foundations of British Foreign Policy*. London 1966, p. 370.

⁸⁶⁾ *Salisbury to White*, May 4, 1878. *Edwards, White*, p. 134.

⁸⁷⁾ *Elliot to White*, Vienna, May 17, 1870. *Ibid.*, pp. 135, 136.

pas assez immédiatement intéressée dans cette question pour qu'elle soit autorisée à encourir seule la responsabilité de s'opposer au changement proposé, et ainsi elle s'engage à ne pas contester la décision définitive de la Russie en ce qui concerne la rétrocession de la Bessarabie."⁸⁸⁾

By the time of the opening of the Congress of Berlin the Russian government was thus certain of the acquiescence of the British government to the reacquisition of southern Bessarabia. German approval had already been given. *Bismarck* consistently urged the Rumanian government to deal directly with St. Petersburg on the matter. The attitude of Austria was, in contrast, to prove more complicated.

On November 27/December 9 the tsar had sent to both *William I* and *Franz Joseph* his conditions for peace based on the decisions reached at Poradim, mentioned above. Not only did these provide for a large Bulgarian state, but they also did not allow Austria-Hungary the compensation previously agreed upon — control of Bosnia and Hercegovina. In his reply of December 26/January 8 *Franz Joseph* naturally objected to those sections which were contrary to previous understandings between Vienna and St. Petersburg, in particular the creation of a large Slavic state. On the question of southern Bessarabia the Habsburg emperor pointed out that the agreements called for a parallel Austrian acquisition of Bosnia-Hercegovina.⁸⁹⁾ The tsar answered on January 4/16 in a brusque manner. He blamed the former Habsburg foreign minister, Count *Buol*, for the retrocession of southern Bessarabia in 1856. He remained adamant on the form of the new Bulgarian state, the two year Russian occupation and the annexation of southern Bessarabia, but he agreed to Habsburg dominance in Bosnia-Hercegovina.⁹⁰⁾ In reply, on January 14/26 *Franz Joseph* maintained the Habsburg objections to the arrangements for Bulgaria.⁹¹⁾ In the next weeks the deadlock continued. In April *Ignatiev* traveled to Vienna to try to reach a settlement. His lack of success led to a more determined Russian effort to obtain an agreement with Britain, resulting in the understanding of May 18/30.

Although Russia had thus gained British recognition of her acquisition of southern Bessarabia, no similar agreement had been reached with Austria-Hungary. It was, however, clear that the monarchy would

⁸⁸⁾ *Sumner*, *Russia and the Balkans*, p. 648.

⁸⁹⁾ *Rupp*, *op. cit.*, p. 430. The Russian government too recognized the connection between southern Bessarabia and Bosnia-Hercegovina. In the instructions given the Russian representatives to the Congress of Berlin this question was discussed and it was stated: "Les deux annexations étaient dépendantes l'une de l'autre aux termes de nos arrangements." *O.B.T.I.*, III, pp. 126—132.

⁹⁰⁾ *Ibid.*, p. 440.

⁹¹⁾ *Ibid.*, p. 445.

accept the Russian desires if the other matters in conflict could be settled. On May 25/June 6 the Habsburg Empire and Britain made a further agreement. It chiefly concerned the Bulgarian question, but Britain concurred with an Austrian demand that under no circumstances should Russia get Dobrudja.⁹²⁾ Despite the failure to obtain an understanding with Austria-Hungary, it can be seen that Russia went fairly well prepared to Berlin. Certainly the question of Bessarabia appeared virtually settled.^{92a)} The Rumanian attitude of defiance was still maintained, but Bucharest could obviously enlist the support of no great power. Once the congress opened, however, new problems arose.

On June 2/14, at the beginning of the conference, the newspaper *Globe* in London printed the contents of the Russo-British agreement. The strong public reaction which followed greatly embarrassed the British delegation. The chief point at issue was the British acceptance of the Russian acquisition of Batum. In addition, in the meetings of the congress Austria-Hungary continued to insist not only on the control of Bosnia-Herzegovina, but also of the sandjak of Novi Pazar, which was referred to in the meetings of the congress as the enclave. The monarchy wished to make certain that this strip of land would remain as a barrier between Serbia and Montenegro. Austria now made her final approval of the Russian annexation of southern Bessarabia and support on the question of the Asiatic frontier dependent on the acceptance of the Austrian wishes on the sandjak. In order to receive direct instructions from the tsar on these issues, *Nelidov* made a special trip to St. Petersburg during the congress. In the meetings there the disposition of Batum held the foremost position. The question of Bessarabia, tied to that of the enclave, was finally met by concessions to the Habsburg point of view.⁹³⁾ The Habsburg government was thus able to raise its price for an agreement with Russia by once more using the Bessarabian issue.

With the fate of the territory settled by negotiation with the great powers, the Russian government did not need to concern itself unduly

⁹²⁾ W. N. Medlicott, *The Congress of Berlin and After*. London 1938, pp. 25, 26.

^{92a)} In the instructions given the Russian representatives to the Congress of Berlin particular concern was shown over the question of the right of passage to Bulgaria and over the possibility of the neutralization of Rumania, which "equivaudrait à nous fermer à tout jamais l'accès par terre de la presqu'île des Balkans." O.B.T.L., III, p. 131.

⁹³⁾ *Nelidov* commented on the question of the enclave: "... c'est à ce prix qu'était le consentement de l'Autriche pour la Bessarabie, et son opposition, qui en aurait entraîné sans doute d'autres, pouvait faire échouer toute cette affaire à laquelle l'Empereur Alexander II tenait plus qu'aux autres, car il avait fait vœu, disait-on, de reconstituer l'Empire tel qu'il avait reçu de son père, avant les sacrifices faits à Paris en 1856." *Nelidov*, *Souvenirs*, XXX, p. 266. *Miliutin*, *Dnevnik*, III, pp. 73, 74.

about the reaction of the Rumanians. Despite the apparent hopelessness of the situation, the Rumanian delegation to the congress, of which *Brătianu* and *Kogălniceanu* were the principal members, continued to resist the Russian demands. As before, the two Rumanian delegates remained divided. The prince's opinion was now close to that of the foreign minister. *Charles* felt that the situation was impossible and that it would be better to negotiate for better conditions — perhaps the Ruschuk-Varna line for Dobrudja.⁹⁴⁾ Nevertheless once in Berlin *Brătianu* continued in his search for support among the delegates. The German diplomats were polite but firm in their advice that Rumania come to an agreement with Russia.⁹⁵⁾ The French and Italian delegations also could offer no practical assistance. Now that the danger of war had passed, the British representatives were cool. By June 11/23 *Brătianu* was forced to admit that his cause was lost.⁹⁶⁾

On June 24/July 6 the Rumanians were allowed to present their case to the conference. They requested the Danube Delta, a war indemnity and a recognition of their independence; they also asked that they not be required to surrender territory and that the Russians be denied the right of military passage. Their arguments made little impression. Some delegates felt that Rumania was getting the better of the bargain in the exchange of Bessarabia for Dobrudja.⁹⁷⁾ In the final settlement Rumania received the Danube Delta and part of Dobrudja, but the recognition of independence was tied to extremely unpopular political conditions. The boundary of Dobrudja was drawn from a line running just east of Silistra to a point south of Mangalia

⁹⁴⁾ K. K., IV, p. 59. *Charles* was also undoubtedly interested in the possibility of being elected as prince of Bulgaria. When *Ignatiev* had visited Bucharest, he had mentioned this possibility. K. K., III, pp. 458, 460.

⁹⁵⁾ On June 12/24 *Brătianu* wrote *Rosetti* that only *Bismarck* had told him the truth from the beginning; the other powers, in contrast, had wished Rumania to make difficulties for Russia to serve their own interests. K. K., IV, p. 72.

⁹⁶⁾ K. K., IV, p. 66. The telegrams sent by *Brătianu* to *Charles* during the congress all attest to the importance of the Bessarabian question and the hopelessness of the Rumanian position. These are to be found in the *Casa Regală*, State Archives, Bucharest.

⁹⁷⁾ *Disraeli* commented in a letter to Queen *Victoria*: "The Rumanians have made a very good bargain for themselves, which was at the bottom of all their importunity." W. F. Monypenny and G. E. Buckle, *The Life of Benjamin Disraeli*. London 1929, II, p. 1204. *Radowitz*, the German secretary of the congress, spoke in even stronger terms: „Ihr mit so vieler Ostentation geäußerter patriotischer Schmerz war doch zum größten Teil eine Maske und eine Parteinotwendigkeit, im Grunde konnten Sie unmöglich den Tausch von Bessarabien gegen die Dobrudscha mit den Häfen als etwas anderes wie ein vorteilhaftes Geschäft ansehen und kaum erwartet haben, daß die übrigen Mächte deswegen das ganze Friedenswerk hätten in Frage stellen wollen.“ Hajo Holborn, editor, *Aufzeichnungen und Erinnerungen aus dem Leben des Botschafters Joseph Maria von Radowitz*. Berlin and Leipzig 1925, p. 52.

on the Black Sea.⁹⁸⁾ Faced with the united stand of the powers, the Rumanian government was forced to abandon further attempts to retain southern Bessarabia, although considerable resistance was shown in the negotiations on the other sections of the settlement pertaining to Rumania.⁹⁹⁾

With the acceptance by the powers of article 45 of the Treaty of Berlin, Russia thus regained southern Bessarabia. On October 18/30 formal possession was taken of the territory. With this act *Alexander II* reversed the second major stipulation in the Treaty of Paris which he regarded as a blot on his personal honor and dignity. He could now hope to hand to his successor an empire whose boundaries in Europe were in the same form in which he had received them. The reacquisition of southern Bessarabia was, together with the port of Batum, the only lasting gain which Russia made at the Congress of Berlin. The establishment of an autonomous Bulgaria, assumed at the time to be an advantage for Russia, was soon to prove instead a point of weakness for Russian policy.

Although the Russian government thus achieved one of the major goals of its foreign policy since 1856, the price had been high. The campaign against the Ottoman Empire had been more costly than the Russian state could in fact afford. To obtain these three districts, important concessions had been made to other powers. Bosnia, Herzegovina and the enclave, far more valuable territories, became at various times in the negotiations the Habsburg *quid pro quo*. The British government used its assent to bargain for the reduction of the Russian Asiatic gains and to secure the partition of the Bulgaria of San Stefano.

Among the costs must also be reckoned the great revulsion against the Russian action which occurred in Rumania and its affect on Russian Balkan policy. In 1883 Rumania joined with Austria-Hungary and Germany in an agreement directed against Russia. Extreme resentment was felt not only at the Russian act, but also at the means used. It was similar heavy-handed diplomacy which was to alienate the new Bulgarian state from Russia by 1887. Of course, a later Russian return of the three districts would not have cleared the slate between Bucharest and St. Petersburg. At this time and later the Rumanian government sought not just the return of southern Bessarabia, but of the entire

⁹⁸⁾ For the clauses in the Treaty of Berlin relating to Rumania see Sumner, *Russia and the Balkans*, pp. 666, 667.

⁹⁹⁾ For an excellent discussion of this question see W. N. Medlicott, *The Recognition of Roumanian Independence, 1878—1880: Slavonic Review*, XI, 1933, pp. 354—372; 572—589.

province acquired by Russia in 1812, which was clearly Rumanian in nationality.¹⁰⁰⁾

The tsar's fervent personal desire to regain southern Bessarabia was certainly the major force determining Russian policy. No fitter conclusion can be made to a study of this subject than that drawn by the Russian historian, *Serge Goriainov* on this episode in tsarist diplomacy.

"Ce n'est qu'après des efforts surhumaines et des sacrifices inouïs que nous terminâmes la campagne [the war of 1877], qui fut entreprise après des sérieuses hésitations et un long atermoiement. Nous aurions dû l'éviter et la guerre, selon toute probabilité, aurait pu être écartée si l'un des mobiles, qui avait poussé l'empereur Alexandre à déclarer, n'était le sentiment de dignité blessée, qui l'incitait à saisir la moindre occasion pour faire disparaître les dernières conséquences du traité de Paris et restituer à la Russie la partie de la Bessarabie qui lui fut enlevée en 1856.

Huit ans auparavant, ce même sentiment avait porté Alexandre II à se libérer par une déclaration unilatérale des stipulations d'un engagement international. En 1877, ce même sentiment l'entraîna à entreprendre une guerre qui aurait pu, de peu s'en fallut, embraser toute l'Europe et apporta à la Russie des avantages qui ne correspondaient nullement aux sacrifices qu'elle avait dû faire. Comme une des conséquences de cette guerre, fut la réintégration sous le sceptre du souverain de Russie de la partie de la Bessarabie comprenant une surface de 10 000 verstes carrées, qui lui fut enlevée en 1856 et dont la restitution satisfit au sentiment d'amour-propre de l'empereur. Mais si nous comparons ce territoire insignifiant, que la Russie acquérait malgré les protestations des Roumains, avec cette énorme surface de ses possessions dans le nord d'Amérique (plus de 1 500 000 verstes carrées) qu'elle avait tenu à vendre quelques années auparavant, aux Etats-Unis pour 7 200 000 dollars, on ne peut s'abstenir d'observer que cette dernière transaction n'était pas conforme à la dignité d'une grande puissance . . ."¹⁰¹⁾

¹⁰⁰⁾ *Bălăceanu* some years later discussed the cession with *Nelidov*, who expressed the opinion that Russia had made a mistake in alienating Rumania for "un territoire dépourvu de toute importance pour elle, puisque le Danube n'entraîne pas pour 'trente kopecks' dans son trafic commercial". *Nelidov* asked whether *Bălăceanu* thought that the return of the districts would reestablish friendship between the two countries. *Bălăceanu* replied: "Oui, mais c'est la Bessarabie toute entière qui pourrait, seule, être le prix de cette amitié." *Bălăceanu memoirs*, p. 142.

¹⁰¹⁾ *Serge Goriainov*, *Le Bosphore et les Dardanelles*. Paris 1910, p. 376.

Appendix¹⁰²⁾

Notes sur la participation de la Roumanie à la guerre

Dès son arrivée au pouvoir Jean Bratiano avait parlé au consul russe des rumeurs qui avaient couru les années précédentes sur l'intention de la Russie de reprendre la partie de la Bessarabie possédée par la Roumanie et du besoin qu'avait le gouvernement, dans les circonstances présentes, d'être rassuré à cet égard. Le consul ayant repoussé l'idée, que la Russie pût avoir une pareille intention, le Président du Conseil n'en insista pas moins, en demandant une explication cathégorique du gouvernement russe à cet égard, explication qui ne fut pas donnée.

En conséquence, le premier soin de Bratiano, en arrivant à Livadia, en octobre, fut de poser nettement la question au Prince Gortchacow, qui lui répondit, gracieusement d'ailleurs "qu'il aiment à être deviné." Bratiano ne toucha pas la question avec l'Empereur; mais en allant prendre congé du Prince Gortchacow, chez qui il trouva le Général Ignatiew, il y revint, en rappelant la parole que lui avait dite à son arrivée le grand chancelier, et lui dit: "j'ai deviné, que vous voulez nous reprendre la Bessarabie" "Comment!" répliqua le Prince Gortchacow, "n'y a-t-il pas les traités?"; ce qui semblait exclure toute intention de reprise.

Cependant le Général Ignatiew, qui était présent, dit de son côté à Bratiano: "Pourquoi tenez-vous tant à la Bessarabie?", et il ajouta, que la Russie n'avait point de frontières du côté de la Roumanie et qu'il serait facile de donner à celle-ci de larges compensations. Bratiano répondit tout naturellement, "que c'était la Roumanie qui avait besoin d'avoir des frontières pour se défendre, tandis que le grand empire russe n'avait certainement pas à craindre d'être envahi par la Roumanie."

Inutile d'ajouter que ces paroles du Général Ignatiew, en présence des réponses toujours évasives du Prince Gortchacow, laissèrent Bratiano fort inquiet.

Plus tard, M. Nélidoff, premier conseiller de l'ambassade russe à Constantinople, où il suppléait souvent le Général Ignatiew, vint à Bucarest pour proposer au gouvernement roumain une convention relative à la guerre et notamment au passage des troupes russes sur le territoire roumain. Le projet en fût alors élaboré entre lui et les Roumains et c'est lui qui ne voulait pas accepter l'article 2, disant que la crainte très nettement exprimée par les Roumains et à laquelle répondait cet article faisait injure à la Russie; il ajouta même, "que les Russes avaient assez d'une Pologne".

Les Roumains, pour qui cet article était l'objet essentiel de la convention, tinrent bon et le projet de convention fût arrêté tel qu'il est connu, sauf un mot — "actuelle".

Quand vint le moment de cet acte important qui avait été soumis au gouvernement russe, lequel avait donné à son consul général, Baron Stuart, les pouvoirs nécessaires revêtues de la signature du Prince Gortchacow et de l'Empereur lui-même, les Roumains toujours préoccupés d'écartier la possibilité de tout équivoque sentirent le besoin d'ajouter à l'article 2 le mot qui manquait et par lequel la Russie s'engageait à "maintenir et à défendre l'intégrité de la Roumanie". Il voulurent que la convention portât "l'intégrité actuelle". Le Baron Stuart dit qu'il ne pouvait ajouter quoi que ce soit aux termes convenues sans en référer à son gouvernement; ce qu'il fit. Le Prince Gortchacow qui était pressé de conclure, ayant accepté l'addition, la Convention fût signé le 4/16 avril 1877. Les Russes entrèrent en Roumanie le 12/24 avril et la proclamation du Grand Dux fût lancée en même temps. Les soldats en étaient porteurs et l'affichaient partout.

¹⁰²⁾ This description of the negotiations conducted by *Brătianu* on the question of southern Bessarabia was written by the Rumanian minister's secretary, *Dimitrie Sturdza*. It is to be found in the State Archives, Bucharest, in the *Brătianu papers*, Dosar nr. 162/1877 and 164/1877—78.

Le gouvernement roumain, justement blessé de n'avoir pas été prévenu de cette entrée, qui n'était pas acceptable avant la ratification des Chambers, et de voir que la proclamation du Grand Duc ne disait pas un mot de la Convention, signée huit jours auparavant, en vertu de laquelle les Russes pouvaient seulement entrer dans le pays sans violer leurs droits, donna l'ordre d'arracher ces affiches, ce que du reste les habitants faisaient partout spontanément, et d'autre part, en même temps qu'il faisait retirer ses troupes de la frontière russe et du parcours de la route suivie par l'armée russe, qui s'avavançait dans le pays, il faisait également retirer celles qu'il avait échelonné le long du Danube, c. à d. sur la frontière turque, ouvrant ainsi le pays aux Turcs en même temps qu'aux Russes, ce qui était une manière de proclamer la neutralité, que l'Europe ne les avait pas mis en mesure de défendre et ce qui pourrait avoir les plus graves conséquences pour l'armée russe si les Turcs avaient su profiter de la circonstance pour franchir le Danube, surtout du côté de Calafat, ce point si important et si éloigné de la portée de la Russie.

L'Empereur et le Grand Duc Nicolas, alarmés de ces démonstrations inattendues, s'empressèrent d'adresser au Prince de Roumanie deux lettres d'excuses, toutes deux en date de Kichinew, la première du 13/25 et la seconde du 14/26 avril. Ces deux lettres, destinées à expliquer la précipitation de l'entrée des Russes par la nécessité de la faire concorder avec la déclaration de guerre de la Russie à la Turquie, qui est en effet du 12/24 avril, et de couvrir la Roumanie contre les attaques possibles de "l'ennemi", parvinrent toutes deux à Bucarest le 16/28 avril. La lettre du Grand Duc contenait cette allégation, parfaitement inexacte, que la proclamation du 12/24 avril prévenait les habitants, que l'entrée des troupes russes sur le territoire roumain s'effectuait en vertu d'un accord établi entre les deux gouvernements.

Le fait est, que le Grand Duc avait essayé de tenir cette convention comme non avenue, si bien que les Russes, officiers ou soldats, qui avaient affiché la proclamation, et auxquels les Roumains parlaient de la convention, l'ignoraient totalement et ne voulaient d'abord en tenir aucun compte.

Aussitôt après la signature de la double convention, les chambres avaient été convoquées pour le 14/26 avril à l'effet de la ratifier. Cette ratification eût lieu quelques jours après le 17 avril, aussitôt que purent être remplies à la hâte les formalités inséparables de la réunion et la constitution de toute assemblée législative. Il n'est pas nécessaire de faire remarquer, que les deux lettres d'explication de l'Empereur et du Grand Duc étaient arrivées auparavant et que communication en fût donnée aux deux chambres. Grâce à cet accord définitif les difficultés survenues au commencement de la guerre furent écartées. Les Roumains avaient replacé leurs troupes le long du Danube pour préserver leur pays de toute invasion turque et empêcher qu'ils ne devint le théâtre des horreurs de la guerre.

Cette mesure était certainement, comme la convention elle-même, très favorable aux Russes; mais toutes les deux étaient indispensables dans l'intérêt du repos de la Roumanie. Les Turcs auraient dû comprendre, que, dès que les Puissances garantes et la Turquie elle-même avaient refusé de prononcer la neutralité de la Roumanie, celle-ci ne pouvait agir autrement; et ils auraient dû consécutivement s'abstenir d'ouvrir, sans nécessité aucune, les hostilités contre les Roumains, auxquels les rattachaient de vieux liens politiques. Ils firent le contraire. Ils bombardèrent les ports et les places roumaines sur le Danube, firent main basse sur les bâtiments marchands des ports roumains et entreprirent aussi des pillages sur la rive gauche du Danube.

Ces hostilités et ces destructions inutiles irritèrent inévitablement les Roumains, qui d'une part répondirent par de vives canonades au feu des Turcs et qui de l'autre, considérant comme bien rompu le lien qui les unissait à la Porte, proclamèrent leur indépendance le 10/22 mai. Ainsi par la force des choses, les Roumains devenaient les alliés actifs des Russes et les ennemis des Turcs.

Le premier dessein de la Roumanie était cependant de rester absolument sur la défensive et de ne prendre part à aucune entreprise militaire au delà du Danube. Dès que le canon gronda, l'armée roumaine, comme toute autre armée à sa place, sentit s'éveiller ses ardeurs guerrières: le gouvernement les contint.

Il y eût cependant après des pourparlers d'action commune. Les Russes ne voulurent rien entendre de cette action, sans que les troupes roumaines soient placées sous le commandement direct du Grand Duc, ce que les Roumains refusèrent toujours. Les Roumains voulaient que leurs troupes demeurent compactes sous le commandement de leurs chefs, qui ne devaient relever que de leur commandant en chef.

En pareille occurrence il était certain, que si les choses avaient pris le cours, auquel tout le monde s'attendait, c. à d. si les Russes avaient triomphé aisement, les Roumains seraient restés étrangers à la lutte. Mais chacun sait les graves revers que les Russes éprouvèrent non pas tout d'abord, mais dans la période désastreuse pour eux, qui comprend la seconde quinzaine de juillet et la première d'août. Comment dès lors ne pas venir en aide à des hôtes qui étaient devenus des amis? Il ne faut pas oublier que les Russes se présentaient comme des libérateurs des populations chrétiennes de la Turquie et qu'ils pouvaient passer pour les exécuteurs des intentions de l'Europe, obstinément et dédaigneusement repoussées par la Turquie aux conférences de Constantinople. Enfin il était clair que la Roumanie, ayant été entraînée fatalement à se mettre en état d'hostilité avec les Turcs, ne pouvait plus reculer: il lui fallait maintenant appuyer les Russes, non seulement pour continuer à préserver son sol des horreurs de la guerre, mais pour éviter les rigueurs des Turcs, qui vainqueurs n'auraient pas manqué de la traiter en ennemie. On doit peut-être ajouter que les Roumains, qui n'avaient pas fait la guerre depuis deux siècles, n'étaient pas fâchés de se retremper dans ce dût baptême et de montrer à l'Europe, qu'ils n'étaient pas dégénérés de leurs aïeux du temps des Etienne-le-Grand et de Michel-le-Brave. Tout cela rendait la guerre populaire en Roumanie et plusieurs des raisons qui viennent d'être indiquées étaient trop sérieuses et trop impérieuses pour ne pas décider le gouvernement roumain à faire pencher la balance de ce côté.

La première demande s'adressa à l'artillerie roumaine, qui de la rive gauche du Danube contribua à la prise de Nicopoli. La seconde demande eût pour conséquence qu'une division passa à Nicopoli, quand les Russes eurent besoin de concentrer leurs troupes disponibles à Plevna. A la troisième demande, qui fût faite au moment où l'armée russe allait être repoussée sur la rive gauche du Danube, les Roumains passèrent le Danube et s'établirent devant Plevna, contribuant ainsi puissamment à la victoire finale.

Depuis le passage du Danube par les troupes roumaines, tous les soins du gouvernement devaient tendre à éviter la dislocation de l'armée roumaine, en la tenant autant que possible et pour la plus grande partie au moins réunie sous ses chefs, et surtout à ne pas permettre qu'elle fût entraînée trop loin de ses foyers, qu'elle pouvait être appelée à défendre. C'est ce qui fût fait, non pas toujours sans quelques tiraillements entre les deux états-majors, sans des rixes qui devinrent plus accentuées après la prise de Plevna par les armées alliées russes et roumaines.

Le lendemain de la prise de Nicopoli, un détachement de troupes roumaines vint tenir garnison dans cette ville, les Russes allant rejoindre le corps devant Plevna. Alors s'engagèrent de longues et difficiles négociations. L'Empereur et le Grand Duc envoyèrent successivement le Colonel Gherghel, le Lieutenant Colonel Lipoiano, le Général Zefkeri, le Général Ghika et le Colonel Gaillard pour presser le passage des Roumains. Des télégrammes directs se suivirent. Ensuite Jean Bratiano, mandé par le quartier général, alla à Gorni-Studen, accompagné du Colonel Slaniceano, chef de l'état-major de l'armée roumaine. Enfin on aboutit à l'entente désirée. Les troupes roumaines passèrent le Danube, malgré l'opposition du Colonel Mano, qui prétendait que c'était les sacrifier; aussi fût-il remplacé dans le commandement exercé jusqu'alors.

Les troupes alliées autour de Plevna s'élevaient à 33,000 Roumains et 27,000 Russes. Elles furent renforcées par la garde impériale, 30,000 hommes. Le commandement fut donné au Prince, qui le garda jusqu'après la chute de Plevna.

Notice

Les Russes voulaient entrer sans convention

— ont tâché de se passer d'elle

— puis de l'incorporer dans leur armée

— puis on leur impose l'Olt

— et quand les Roumains voulurent passer le Danube pour attaquer les forteresses turques, dont l'artillerie ravageait leur rive et venger les incursions et les pillages accomplis par les Turcs sur leur territoire et dans leurs eaux, les Russes les en empêchèrent en déclarant que cette entreprise serait à leur risques et périls et qu'ils ne pourraient plus invoquer la convention.

Après l'entrée des Russes, Bratiano alla au quartier général à Kichinew, où il devait négocier la limite entre les deux armées. Le Grand Duc porta un toast "à l'union" pour éviter des conflits, et il fut convaincu que les Roumains occuperaient la Petite Valachie, de Islas, le long de l'Olt. Au quartier général de Ploiesti, avant le passage du Danube par les Russes, le Prince Gortchacow reprit avec Kogalnitchano la thèse du Général Ignatiew.

Dans des entretiens ultérieurs on obtint de l'Empereur les forteresses de la rive droite du Danube, comme garanties de la paix. A cette occasion Miloutine fit la question: "Mais ne vous a-t-on pas parlé de la Bessarabie?" Fort inquiet, Jean Bratiano, venant du quartier général d'au delà du Danube à Bucarest, en parla au Prince Gortchacow, qui dit "oui". Retournant immédiatement au quartier général pour parler à l'Empereur, le Général Ghika l'en détourne.

Allant, après la chute de Plevna, chez l'Empereur pour prendre congé, il trouva Ignatiew, qui lui dit, avant d'entrer chez l'Empereur. "Nous allons avoir la paix. L'Empereur est très bien disposé à votre égard. Demandez-lui tout ce que vous voulez." L'Empereur portait la médaille roumaine. Bratiano lui adressa des félicitations sur les succès obtenus et basé sur les paroles de l'Empereur après la prise de Grivitza "de l'alliance indissoluble entre la Russie et la Roumanie", il pria le Czar de recommander cette alliance à son héritier. Après l'audience, Bratiano rencontra de nouveau le Général Ignatiew, qui trouva que l'audience avait été très expéditive. L'Empereur invita Bratiano à dîner, où il ne put aller. Le lendemain le Général Ignatiew vint chez Bratiano de bon matin. Bratiano dormait; plus tard Bratiano était sorti pour vaquer, après les nouvelles dispositions prises, aux nécessités de l'armée.

Bratiano et l'Empereur de Russie à propos de la Bessarabie

Fin novembre vieux style 1877

Il semblait, après la signature de la Convention du 4/16 avril, dans les conditions qui viennent d'être expliqués, que toute arrière pensée de la Russie à l'endroit de la Bessarabie fût impossible. Il eut cependant divers incidents, qui prouvèrent aux Roumains que cette pensée n'était pas abandonnée. A Ploiesti où était le quartier général de l'armée avant qu'elle passât le Danube, Gortchacow reprit avec Kogalnitchanu la thèse d'Ignatieff. Plus tard, devant Plevna, lorsqu'il semblait que les services rendus par l'armée roumaine dussent avoir écarté toute arrière pensée de la Russie contre la Roumanie, divers incidents réveillèrent cependant les craintes de Bratiano.

C'est pendant le siège de Plevna, lorsque l'armée roumaine avait déjà fait ses preuves. Les Roumains voulaient garder l'occupation des forteresses de la rive droite du Danube comme garanties de la paix et gages d'indemnité de guerre. Bratiano était

venu au grand quartier général pour féliciter l'Empereur des victoires obtenues. Dans la conversation qui s'engagea avec le Président du Conseil de Roumanie, l'Empereur, croyant que les Roumains voulaient la possession définitive de ces forteresses, dit qu'il y consentait, mais qu'il ne pouvait répondre que l'Europe la sanctionnât. Bratiano ayant expliqué au Czar, qu'il ne songeait qu'à une occupation provisoire et temporaire, la chose ne fit aucune difficulté.

Comme Bratiano sortait de cette audience, le Général Miloutine, ministre de la guerre, qui savait vaguement de quoi il s'agissait, mais croyait aussi que les Roumains voulaient s'assurer des avantages définitifs, et auquel Bratiano dit que tout était arrangé, lui répliqua: "Mais l'Empereur ne vous a-t-il pas parlé de la Bessarabie?" Ce mot inquiéta vivement Bratiano, qui en arrivant à Bucarest, où se trouvait le Prince Gortchacow, s'en expliqua nettement avec lui. "Oui, dit le Grand Chancelier, l'Empereur veut la Bessarabie. *C'est une sottise*, mais il la veut."

Bratiano retourna alors à Plevna, tout exprès pour en parler à l'Empereur. A son arrivée le Général Ghika, qui était attaché au quartier général russe, le détourna d'aborder ce sujet, en lui représentant, que c'est mettre l'Empereur en demeure d'avouer son dessein, ce qu'il n'a pas osé faire jusqu'ici et qu'il ne fallait pas lui en fournir l'occasion. Bratiano céda à cette considération et crut avoir lieu de l'en applaudir, en voyant presque aussitôt après, combien on souhaitait autour de l'Empereur que l'occasion fût donnée à celui-ci de s'expliquer.

Plevna était tombée grâce au concours des Roumains et Bratiano, sur le point de retourner à Bucarest, alla chez l'Empereur pour prendre congé. Il y trouva d'abord Ignatiew, qui lui dit: "Nous allons pouvoir faire la paix. C'est le moment d'adresser des demandes à l'Empereur. Je ne l'ai jamais vu aussi bien disposé envers quelqu'un, comme il l'est aujourd'hui envers vous. Il se plaint que vous ne lui demandez jamais rien. L'Empereur est timide, il faut lui ouvrir la voie. Demandez, demandez sans crainte." Bratiano, convaincu que ces incitations n'avaient d'autre objet, que de fournir à l'Empereur l'occasion de réclamer la Bessarabie en échange d'autres avantages, se garda bien de suivre le conseil.

Il trouva l'Empereur radieux. Alexandre avait sur sa poitrine la décoration roumaine et se répandant en félicitations sur la glorieuse conduite de l'armée alliée, il dit au Ministre roumain: "Je suis fier de porter votre étoile" et il ajouta "Je serais très heureuse de pouvoir vous donner un témoignage de mes sentiments pour la Roumanie et pour vous en particulier." Bratiano, lui rappelant alors les paroles qu'il avait prononcées après la prise de Grivitza et qui promettaient aux Roumains une "alliance indissoluble", dit alors à l'Empereur, que, bien certain que sa Majesté n'oublierait pas cette promesse, il ne lui demandait qu'une chose, à savoir, de la recommander à son héritier.

Ne semblait-il pas en effet, dans un pareil moment, que la Bessarabie n'avait pas besoin d'être nommée pour être écartée des arrières pensées du Tsar?

En sortant de cette audience que Bratiano n'avait pas voulu prolonger, il retrouva le Général Ignatiew qui lui dit: "Comme vous êtes expéditif! Avez-vous au moins fait toutes vos demandes?" "Je n'en ai fait aucune, répondit Bratiano en souriant. Que voulez-vous? Quand je suis devant l'Empereur, je suis trop intimidé!"

L'Empereur l'avait invité à dîner pour le jour même. Bratiano, indisposé, ne put y aller. Ignatiew vint le lendemain le voir mais Bratiano, encore souffrant, dormait. Plus tard Ignatiew chercha Bratiano à Bucarest et à Vienne, mais en vain. Bratiano l'évitait.