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**ОТНОШЕНИЕТО НА РУМЪНИЯ КЪМ СЪЕДИНЕНИЕТО  
НА ИЗТОЧНА РУМЕЛИЯ С БЪЛГАРИЯ (1885)**

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**ROMANIA'S ATTITUDE REGARDING THE UNION OF  
EASTERN RUMELIA WITH BULGARIA (1885)**

Romania's attitude regarding the union of Eastern Rumelia with Bulgaria(1885) was different in comparison with Serbian and Greek one, which didn't agree with this act. Serbia launched an attack over Bulgaria, but the Bulgarians rejected it. It was the Serbian-Bulgarian war of 1885. The peace treaty of this war was signed in Bucharest, Romania, in March 1886. After this, the Bulgarian prince Battneberg(unofficially) visited Romania, being at Bucharest and Sinaia, where, together with the Romanian king, Charles I, planned a Romanian-Bulgarian federation, for ceasing the influence of Tzarist Russia in South Eastern Europe.

The problem of Romania's attitude regarding the Union of Eastern Rumelia with Bulgaria and of the Serbian-Bulgarian war has never been neglected by historical researches. Although older articles and books both from Romanian and Bulgarian historiography but also from the foreign one reflect that the willing of Bucharest government was the same as the willing of Athens or Belgrade position in general view, the studies appeared with the occasion of the celebrating 100 years from the Union, and those published after 1985, enable us to make an accurate analysis of the event, which permit us to see the position adopted by Bucharest, different from Athens or Belgrade one, regarding the Union of Eastern Rumelia with Bulgaria, only if we take into account the position of neutrality adopted by the Government of Bucharest. Having some information from the French Archives we are trying to note down some of the characteristics of the neutrality attitude of Romania, during the international crisis provoked by the Plovdiv events.

The event was seen like that: *"At 6/18 September 1885, at 7.00 a.m. the Government of Eastern Rumelia, composed of the members of Central Revolutionary Bulgarian Comunittee, which was based at Plovdiv few month before, telegraphically announced Prince Alexander Battenberg, who was at Varna, the Union of Bulgaria with the autonomous Principality; 35 minutes later, the same news was sent from old Philippopoli, to the President of the Minister's Council, Petko Karavelov, who was at Turnovo, saying that "peace and calm are everywhere".*<sup>1</sup>

Prince Alexander and Karavelov were caught between the danger of defying Russia, if they accepted the Union, and that of defying the public opinion, by not paying attention of what it wanted. The Liberal President of the National Assembly, Stefan

Stambolov(1854-1895) reminded the Prince that he had to choose between returning back to Germany and going to Plovdiv.<sup>2</sup> Alexander Battenberg officially accepted the Union, at 8/20 September and he proclaim himself Prince of unified Bulgaria.<sup>3</sup> The next day, Alexander Battenberg and Petko Karavelov arrived at Plovdiv informing the Turkish Government and the Great Powers ambassadors at Sofia, about the Union, saying that this was made not against the Turkish authority, which suzerainty recognized it, asking the agreement of the Sultan regarding the Union. The same petition had been sent to the English Foreign Affairs Minister. On 11/23 September, the Bulgarian National Assembly approved a petition which had to be sent to Russian Tzar, Alexander III, in which he was asked to protect the Union.

The action of 1885 was not seen well by the Russian Tzar, Alexander III, who erased Battenberg from the Russian army, calling back all Russian officers who were still in Bulgaria (Russia had been the protective power for Bulgaria).<sup>4</sup> Serbia protested also violently regarding the Union saying that the Treaty of Berlin(1878) had been broken. King Milan and the government lead by the Conservative Ilija Garashanin, reacted, being afraid that the unionist movement would spread in Macedonia too.<sup>5</sup> The efforts of the Turkish Minister at Belgrade proved inefficient, in his trying to underline that any aggression against Bulgaria, (who was within the Ottoman Empire at that time) was considered as an aggression against the Turkish administration, had not been “*heard*” neither by King Milan nor his government; the formal agreement with Greece had not returning Milan from his war plans. Even Austro-Hungary who sustained the Serbian king tried at last to calm down Milan expecting the decisions of a Balkan Conference. The Great Powers representatives and Turkey had met at Constantinople trying to solve the crisis of Plovdiv events.<sup>6</sup>

After trying to create an anti-Bulgarian Balkan coalition and having the support of Austro-Hungarian Government, Serbia declared war on Bulgaria, saying that at the Serbian-Bulgarian border some Serbian soldiers had been attacked. Before this, King Milan had tried to make an alliance with Bucharest and Athens, but without any result. Greece had sent several troops at the Turkish border. They contracted even a loan at the National Bank but this was all, despite the declarations of Greek government at the address of Porte. The Great Powers had finally recognized the Union. Turkey, as suzerain power, wanted to melt in this problem but no Great Power agreed that. Besides that, the defying of Russia of the Sofia Government, had changed the attitude of Great Britain. The English opinion regarding the emergence of a great south Bulgarian state under the tutelage of Saint-Petersburg, was not seen well by the British, who tried to blur the Russian influence in South-Eastern Europe. The anti-Russian attitude of Battenberg had changed the British views into favorable, and so were the Austro-Hungarian ones. In fact Russia had nothing to do to stop the Union. The Porte recognized the Union naming Battenberg as a Governor of Rumelia on a 5 years period. Battenberg unified the two Parliaments.

Romania hadn't answered favorably to Serbian questions (the memory of the Union of Romanian Principalities made by Prince Alexander Joan Cuza and breaking down of the international treaties was still alive) it would try to make its own petitions. Peace and equilibrium in South-Eastern Europe became the main aims of Romanian

Foreign policy, after the great success obtained at Berlin (1878). This was the mentality of the Romanian politicians. To a better understanding of this attitude, let's remind that in March-April 1885, Romania had been restless by the imminence of an Anglo-Russian conflict regarding Afghanistan. This conflict of interests was finally solved in December 1885. The news of diplomatic solving of this conflict had been well received at Bucharest. The French representative in Romania noticed on this occasion: *"We would never imagine the restless which the imminence of an Anglo-Russian conflict had produced on King Charles's counsellors. They didn't want to hide the fact that the Balkan Peninsula would be the first to feel the counter-strike of fight and had seen their country at the mercy of the neighbours which competitions and pretensions are always alive"*<sup>7</sup> It was obvious the attitude of Romania regarding some crisis in the South of the Danube, which could negatively affect the interest of Romania.<sup>8</sup>

They could see the emotion produced by the events of Plovdiv of 6/18 September 1885. The French representative, Earl Disibach noticed: *"The news are finally arriving, and slowly the calm spreads everywhere. For the moment, we are happy, asking ourselves what could have happened if the Prince of Bulgaria taken this decision, all by himself, and in this situation would he been rejected? If he hadn't decided himself would he been assured by the support of one of the Great Powers?"* For the French diplomat the task of the Romanian government was obvious because they didn't know what Power was that: Germany, Austria or Russia or neither of them. Earl Disibach didn't hide neither his own opinion regarding the Romanian government's position: *"The Romanian government is certain, I think, and this is the opinion of German and Austrian Ministers too, with whom I had a meeting today, by the necessity of observing the greatest calm ever seen/.../. I have no difficulty disusing this problem with Mister Campineanu (Romanian Foreign Minister in the Liberal Govern Bratianu, o.n.) and we considered ourselves prepared and ready/.../ since following the instructions, we have made public that the French government thinks that, in the moment circumstances, the events should be situated only between Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia"*<sup>9</sup>

On 17 October, the new French Minister in Romania, de Coutuly, had arrived at Bucharest, and two days after, presented his letters of accreditation. The new diplomat wasn't familiar with the Romanian policy, on 20 October he noticed: *"the Romanian public is less preoccupied, as I considered, by the crisis produced by the Bulgarian revolution, King Charles is better and highly situated to judge the attitude of his neighbour Serbia, who was afraid and imprudent in the same time, and he was touched by the good words coming from everywhere, for the wisdom and political spirit which he made proved, staying neutral..."*<sup>10</sup>

On 29 October, in a discussion with Ion Campineanu, de Coutuly, expressed his opinion, after 14 days since the Plovdiv events. The French diplomat observed that: *"the first news of Plovdiv had produced much restlessness over Prime-Minister Bratianu and King Charles. He couldn't protect himself by any suspicion/.../ that Russia tried or even more organized the revolution who surprised all Europe. Under this situation they had to say that, a war could emerge from one moment to other, and this war would trained again, with no doubt, the Russian troops in the Low Danube area. As in this situation*

Romania would have been trained too, despite the fact that it played an active role, they previewed the possibility of a mobilization of the army. We have been rapid assured, by some testifies, that not only Russian Chancellery considered dangerous the mobilization of the Rumeliots, but so did the Tzar, who was unsatisfied by the fact that Battenberg was seriously irritated against him. When he wanted to recall the Russian officers from Bulgaria, the uncertainty disappeared and the Romanian government, had immediately taken the decision to maintain a passive attitude. For a better understanding of his disposals to give up making the autumn army moves, which could gave birth to the idea that he prepared for action, and the King was pleased to visit the soldiers in their usual unities. At that moment, King Milan had sent King Charles by a Romanian citizen, M. Catargi, his help an the battlefield of King Milan and his uncle's the initiative for signing up of an offensive and defensive alliance, for an immediate common action. King (Charles, ) refused the invitation, his government agreed that Romania had no interests to recall for compensations, or enlarging territory to the Ssouth of the Danube./.../, on the other side, that the making of a Great Bulgaria, without embarrassing the Romanian interests, could serve himself and because of this reason, it should abstain itself from any move, which could delay or simply hinde such a fact. Finally, at Bucharest they think that the smallest states on the Balkan Peninsula will become independent and strong, besides this they will be capable of making sacrifices themselves for that their civilization should progress, and they will develop their natural resources; in addition, Romania would have the chance not to see the Russian troops crossing its national territory. They considered that The Oriental Question could be solved without great wars, in the day that little Balkan states should be formed in such a way that they could get rid of the protection of the neighbour Great Powers; and as the Romanian ambitions would pull them some day to North-West not to South, they will easily forget that in Macedonia there are small groups of Romanian Christians. In this time, since the Serbs were ready to start a war, the restless began to show again. Bratianu and his colleagues could not think that Serbia could had taken such a decision of attacking Bulgaria, if it had not received approval from Viena or Berlin, or even promised of help in case of major danger. As for King Charles was important to be certain on this aspect, he asked Bratianu to go personally and ask for positive information in the two capitals. From Berlin, the Romanian Prime-Minister noticed the conviction that the German Chancellery wouldn't have said anything to give hopes to the Serbians, and at Viena he received formal declarations in the same way. He is still having, in the same time, doubts regarding the attitude of the Austro-Hungarian government."<sup>11</sup>

These testifies of the French diplomat confirm the fact that Romania had a neutral attitude regarding the events of Plovdiv. There are more proves that attest the fact that the government of Bucharest helped morally and materially the Bulgarians during the Serbian aggression. For confirming that there are the diplomatic reports of the French vice-consul at Constanza, Urbain Choisserie.

The next day after the Serbian hostilities against Bulgaria had began, Urbain Choisserie observed the intense activity regarding the organization of some Bulgarian volunteer groups who left to Giurgiu and then to Ruse. He noticed that: "the Bulgarian

*freedom of action in Dobrudja is deep and complete. This state of facts seems to me ready to challenge suspicions from the Porte, who saw in this attitude of Romania a moral encouragement and a moral support given to the rebels.*"<sup>12</sup>

At the beginnings of December, Urbain Choiserie reported that "the Bulgarians are continuing here to collect funds which are going to be sent in Bulgaria, signaling that at Tulcea the population had sent 25 000 francs for helping the damaged people and for clothes necessary to Bulgarian soldiers on the Serbian battlefield." One month later, the same French diplomat, was making a balance of the atmosphere within the Bulgarian community in Dobrudja, he remarked "the enthusiasm emerged among them finding out the emergence of the Rumelians revolution underlining the subscriptions made by them for the joining the armies of their brothers."<sup>13</sup>

After the war of 1877, the autonomous Principality of Bulgaria tried to get rid, politically and in the law point of view of the Ottoman suzerainty, through the creation of a personal union with Romania, followed after that, by a real Union, but this wasn't possible. If the objective of the creation of the personal union with Romania had been possible, Bulgaria would have obtained the political independence. At the beginning, King Charles and Prime-Minister Bratianu had received the proposal in a favorable way, since the Treaty of Berlin hadn't forbidden Romania the making of a personal union with the states in the neighbourhood. Russia saw in this project a threat at his "parent" position in Bulgaria, which under the Romanian influence would have become more liberal, in the eyes of Sankt-Petersburg authorities.

In such a situation, careful, King Charles (Romania had become Kingdom in March 1881) communicated to the Russian Govern, through the Tzar Minister at Bucharest, Hitrov, that "he would never decide to sit on the Bulgarian Throne, without the permission of the Russian Tzar, which is highest than everything"<sup>14</sup>

Adopting the non-intervention behaviour towards the other states in the conflict, Romania gained the respect of the combative forces. The objectiveness from Bucharest of the Balkan problems will be the premises of Bismark's choice for Romanian capital as place of peace treaties. The peace conferences were held in the halls of Finance Ministry of Bucharest. The Peace was signed at Bucharest on 19 February/3 March 1886.

The next day after the signing of the Peace Treaty, the Romanian Foreign Minister, Mihail Pherekyde, had offered a lunch where they drank the peace wine. The Bulgarian Minister at the Peace Conference, Ivan Geshov expressing his gratitude and his government appreciation for Romania's efforts to reestablish the peace declared to the chief of Romanian diplomacy: "I have made of this a duty of transmitting to my government the expression of joy with whom you saluted the peace. It will see, I'm certain, in this a proof of the friendship of Romanian Government regarding our country and will accept such a sincere peace felt by you too, giving birth to new relations and new contacts with a country in which capital the peace was signed."<sup>15</sup>

In the first half of 1886 had been produced the normality of the Bulgarian-Romanian relations. The Common commission called to draw up the Bulgarian-Romanian border in Dobrudja (at Arab-Tabia) had accomplished its mission. The border line has

been delimited and there were fixed the geographic orientation points of it. By the Convention, they established that Arab-Tabia should be within Romanian borders, as while other populated points which were held in Romanian intervention to be left to Bulgaria. For celebrating the Commission results Prince Alexander Battenberg personally came (unofficially) to Cotroceni, the residence of Romanian King in Bucharest. His staying lasted two days, when he met with King Charles I. They established a new unofficial meeting at Sinaia, which offered the occasion for speculations regarding the establishment of a new Balkan federation.

The realization of this Bulgarian project, which should include in the federation Greece and Serbia would have probably avoid the useless Balkan Wars of 1912-1913, conflicts which gave the Balkans the surname of “Europe’s gun powder keg”.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> **Jordan, C.** L’Union de la Roumélie Orientale avec la Bulgarie (1885). Notes sur l’attitude de la Roumanie. – In « Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes » (**RESEE**), Bucu­rești, XXIII, 1985, nr 3, p. 253.

<sup>2</sup> **Pawlovitch, S.** Istoria Balcanilor (1804–1945). Iași, Editura Polirom, 2002, p. 136.

<sup>3</sup> **Ciachir, N.** Istoria Slavilor. București, Editura Oscar Print, 1998, pp. 295.

<sup>4</sup> **Ciachir, N.** România in sud-estul Europei 1848–1886. București, Editura Politică, 1968, p. 205.

<sup>5</sup> **Стателова, Е.** Съединението на Княжество България и Източна Румелия (1885). – В: България 681–1981. С., 1981, p. 304.

<sup>6</sup> **Стефанов, Г.** Международни отношения и външна политика на България 1790–1970. С., 1977, pp. 66–68.

<sup>7</sup> **Jordan, C.** De nouveau sur l’attitude de La Roumanie a l’égard de l’union de La Roumélie Orientale avec La Bulgarie, in **RESEE**, tome XLIII(nr 1–4), 2005, pp. 346–347.

<sup>8</sup> Ibidem., p. 2.

<sup>9</sup> Ibidem., p. 3.

<sup>10</sup> Ibidem., p. 4.

<sup>11</sup> Ibidem, p. 5–6: **Radulescu, A., Bitoleanu, I.** Istoria românilor dintre Dunăre și Mare Dobrogea. București, Editura științifică și enciclopedică, 1979, p. 285 și urm.

<sup>12</sup> **Jordan, C.** Ibidem, p. 261.

<sup>13</sup> **Ciachir, N.** La conclusion de la paix de Bucarest en 1886 au lendemain des événements balkaniques de 1885–1886, în **RESEE**, nr. 3–4, 1963, p. 210.

<sup>14</sup> **Archives** of Romanian Foreign Affairs Ministry, Fund. Independence War, vol. 168, f. 42.

<sup>15</sup> **Jordan, C.** L’Union de la Roumelie Orientale..., p. 262.