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RUSSO-BULGARIAN RELATIONS, 1892–1896: WITH PARTICULAR
REFERENCE TO THE PROBLEM OF THE
BULGARIAN SUCCESSION

CHARLES JELAVICH

In the nineteenth century Russia encouraged the development of nationalism in the Balkans, especially among the Slavs, not only because of the natural sympathy of her people for their kindred in race, religion, and culture, but also because the establishment of independent states would weaken Russia’s adversaries, Turkey and Austria-Hungary. Russia thus would find it less difficult to achieve her main purpose in the Near East—the control of the Turkish straits. The strategic importance of Bulgaria made it inevitable that Russia would seek to establish, for her own vital national interests, an independent Bulgaria. The first step in this direction occurred in 1870, when Russia was able to use her influence with the Porte to have the latter create the Bulgarian exarchate. Then in 1877, Russia, in behalf of the Balkan Slavs, went to war against Turkey, which culminated in the following year in the establishment of an autonomous Bulgaria. Thus it was principally through Russian intervention that the Bulgars were liberated.

The Russian government, in return for the decisive aid which it had rendered in the creation of the new state, expected the Bulgarian government to follow a policy of political and diplomatic subservience to Russia, in order to permit the latter to strengthen her position at the Straits. Throughout the period of the sixties and seventies, the Russians and Bulgarians had co-operated effectively and had worked toward a common goal. After the liberation, however, when it became apparent to the Bulgarian government and people that Russia considered them a mere pawn to be used in international power diplomacy, they naturally reacted violently against this policy. A typical example of the consequences of this Bulgarian resentment is furnished by the constitutional problem of 1892–93 and the question of the marriage of Prince Ferdinand. This episode illustrates clearly how Bulgarian nationalism, pride, and spirit of independence—qualities which the Russian government had made use of against the Turks—were now to plague the liberating nation.

The principal architect of Russian foreign policy in the Balkans in this period was Tsar Alexander III. A disciple of the ultra-reactionary K. P. Pobedonostsev, Alexander adhered to his teacher’s principles of orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationalism. Reflecting these teachings, Alexander wrote in 1885 that, with respect to the Balkans, “the Slavs must

1 This article is based primarily on material collected in the Public Record Office in London and the Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv in Vienna in 1948–49 as part of a larger study of Russian relations with Serbia and Bulgaria from 1881 to 1897. An abbreviated version of this article was delivered at the meeting of the Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association held at Mills College, Dec. 28, 1949.

now serve Russia and not we them."\(^3\) The strong reaction of the Bulgarian government against such an attitude, together with a series of arrogant and overbearing acts on the part of Russian officials in Bulgaria, finally, in November 1886, led to the actual rupture of diplomatic relations.\(^4\) Thereafter, the tsar, feeling personally insulted by the actions of a government which he regarded as his vassal, actually approved a plan devised by a group of Bulgarian emigrants to precipitate a revolt in Bulgaria. Their object was the overthrow of the interim anti-Russian government of Stefan Stambolov and the restoration of a pro-Russian administration.\(^5\) When this plan proved abortive, Alexander unsuccessfully tried to impose upon the Bulgarians the Caucasian Prince Mingrel’skii as the successor to Alexander of Battenberg.\(^6\) Instead of accepting this Orthodox candidate, the assembly offered the position to Ferdinand of Coburg, who was both German and Catholic. Thus by 1888 Alexander realized that conspiratorial intrigues and diplomatic pressure would not secure Bulgarian compliance. Therefore, he decreed that henceforth Russia should pursue a policy of noninterference in Bulgarian affairs. Under no condition, however, would he recognize Ferdinand as the legal ruler of Bulgaria.\(^7\)

Although Ferdinand had been elected by the Bulgarian assembly, he had been unable to obtain the approval of the great powers or of the sultan, as prescribed by the Treaty of Berlin. Austria-Hungary and Great Britain regarded Ferdinand’s assumption of office as illegal, but not his election. Despite the fact that they would not grant official recognition because of the strong opposition of Russia, they did let it be known that they would not approve the use of coercive measures to oust the prince. Since Russia did not deem it advisable to act unilaterally and thus perhaps even precipitate a European war, Ferdinand remained on the Bulgarian throne even without the recognition of the great powers, and consequently in violation of the Treaty of Berlin.\(^8\)

Recognizing the unsatisfactory aspects of their status, Ferdinand and Stambolov, who had adopted a policy of seeking closer ties with the Turks, endeavored by every means possible to persuade the sultan to grant recognition, regardless of the Russian attitude; but Abdul Hamid II, in fear of and in deference to his powerful neighbor, remained aloof. In the beginning of 1891, however, the Turkish commissioner in Sofia for the first time asked for an audience with Ferdinand, and in May of that year Franz Josef received the prince, but only as a private citizen. In June 1892, Queen Victoria also consented to receive Ferdinand. All these steps were looked on with

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\(^3\) Text of a letter from Alexander III to the minister of war, Obruchev, in *Krasnyi Arkhiv* [Red archive], XLVI (1931), 180–81.

\(^4\) For an excellent discussion of early Russo-Bulgarian difficulties see C. E. Black, *The establishment of constitutional government in Bulgaria* (Princeton, 1943); also S. Radev, * stroitelite na suvremena Burgariia* [The founders of contemporary Bulgaria] (2 vols.; Sofia, 1911).

\(^5\) This problem is discussed in P. Pavlovich (ed.), *Avantiury Russkogo Tsarizma v Burgarii* [The adventures of Russian tsarism in Bulgaria] (Moscow, 1935), pp. 38–58 (hereafter cited as “Avantiury”).


\(^7\) Great Britain, Foreign office, *Further correspondence respecting affairs in the east: Turkey*, No. 3 (1889), pp. 38–40; Morier to Salisbury, St. Petersburg, Feb. 24, 1888, enclosures 1 and 2.

great satisfaction in Sofia, although they in no sense could be construed as the official recognition of the prince.9

Meanwhile, the unstable and dangerous aspects of the position in which Ferdinand found himself became progressively more apparent. Despite the tsar's order to the contrary, Russian officials continued to interfere in Bulgarian internal affairs with the intention of creating an insurrection against the government. They were particularly active among the refugees who had left Bulgaria to escape the repressive measures of the Stambolov regime or to avoid imprisonment for their past political activities. Some of these men were infiltrated into Bulgaria in 1891 with instructions to assassinate Stambolov. Although they failed to achieve their assigned task, they did manage to kill the minister of finance, K. Belchev, and Stambolov himself had a very narrow escape. The following year another group assassinated the Bulgarian minister in Constantinople, Dr. Vulkovich. In both instances Russian officials participated directly or indirectly.10 Thus by the summer of 1892 Ferdinand and his ministers quite correctly felt that their position was hazardous in the extreme, and certainly Bulgaria did not have the stable and secure government that the young nation needed.

In August 1892, however, Ferdinand had reason to hope that perhaps the sultan might yet recognize him. At that time Stambolov, who was vacationing at the Black Sea port of Varna, received a request from the sultan to visit him.11 Since this would undoubtedly be interpreted as a step toward the eventual recognition of the prince, the sultan took care to inform the Russian government that the prime minister's visit had "no political importance."12 It was not until a month later that the Russian government answered with a sharp note of protest against the granting of the audience. The Russian note was delivered not so much to protest against Stambolov's visit as to deter the sultan from extending a similar invitation to Prince Ferdinand, who now was also vacationing at Varna.13 Stambolov was thus forced to recognize that the sultan would not act against the wishes of Russia, but he was not dismayed by the sultan's intransigence. On the contrary, it made him more determined than ever to find other ways to stabilize the situation in Bulgaria.

Stambolov was particularly aware of the danger which would befall his country if the ruler were assassinated, and he realized that the state of constant uncertainty and fear could not continue much

9 Stanev, p. 105.
11 Great Britain, Public record office, Political Despatches, Lowther to Salisbury, F.O. 78/4444, No. 121, Sofia, Aug. 16, 1892.
12 Morier to Rosebery, F.O. 181/709(2), No. 189, St. Petersburg, Aug. 23, 1892; France, Ministère des affaires étrangères, Documents diplomatiques français (1871-1914) (hereafter cited as "D.D.F."), 1re série (1871-1900) (Paris, 1939), IX, 665-66, Ribot to de Montebello, Paris, Aug. 13, 1892 and n. 3; Cambon to Ribot, Therapia, Aug. 25, 1892, ibid., X, 4-8.
13 Lowther to Rosebery, F.O. 78/4444, No. 139, Sofia, Oct. 1, 1892; Ford to Rosebery, F.O. 195/1747, No. 328, Constantinople, Oct. 29, 1892; Ford to Rosebery, F.O. 105/1747, No. 304, Constantinople, Sept. 30, 1892. For the French and Austrian reactions to this step see Bourgarel to Ribot, Therapia, Sept. 18, 1892, D.D.F., X, 35, and Austria-Hungary, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Politisches Archiv (hereafter cited as "H.H.S.") XII, 137; Turquie, Varia, Calice to Kalnoky, Privatbrief, Bujukdere, Oct. 31, 1892. Ivan Panaiotov, Russiia, Veliktie Sili i Bulgarskiiat Vuproso sled Ishora na Kniaz Ferdinanda (1888-1896) [Russia, the great powers, and the Bulgarian question after the election of Prince Ferdinand (1888-1896)] (Sofia, 1941), pp. 175-76, states that P. Dimitrov, the Bulgarian representative in Constantinople, maintained that the purpose of Stambolov's visit was to pave the way for a similar trip by Ferdinand.
longer without endangering both the regime in power and the state as a whole. Since the great powers refused to recognize Ferdinand, it seemed that the problem of gaining stability could best be solved by the establishment of a dynasty. If Ferdinand had an heir, there would be less incentive to assassinate the prince, since his son would continue the royal line under a regency. In addition, the Bulgarians were anxious that a dynasty be established which would provide firm leadership through the difficult days which would ensue when Bulgaria sought to absorb Macedonia, the goal of all patriotic citizens.14

Ferdinand pondered the question of marriage many times, but two obstacles were in the way. No princess, acceptable to him as a bride, was willing to share his throne, since he was not recognized by the great powers and since Article 38 of the Bulgarian constitution required that the children of the prince must be Orthodox. Stambolov believed that if this latter condition were removed, it would be possible for Ferdinand to marry even without first obtaining recognition by the other governments. Therefore, after long and careful consideration, Stambolov decided that for the welfare of the nation it would be necessary to secure the amendment of Article 38.15

After consulting only a few of his closest friends, Stambolov, on December 2, 1892, proposed to the astonished Bulgarian assembly that the constitution should be changed so that the children of the prince could profess the religion of their parents. The proposal threw the crowded assembly into an uproar. The greatest question at issue was what attitude Russia would assume. Surely this was an open and direct challenge to St. Petersburg, the champion and defender of orthodoxy. It was an insult to the state which helped create the Bulgarian exarchate and championed the cause of the Christians against the Turkish infidel. It seemed sheer folly to assume that this measure would receive the sanction of the people in view of the fact that the exarch and the Bulgarian church hierarchy were considered devoted followers of the Russian government. Certainly, the Bulgarian people, who were willing to defy Russia in political matters, would not also challenge her in the religious sphere.16

Although most of the delegates were frightened by the thought of the course Russia might pursue, some believed Stambolov had not gone far enough. They were in favor of a proclamation of Bulgarian independence. In his reply to this group Stambolov very clearly stated his entire position and the dangers to be encountered if such a course were followed. The prime minister admitted that independence was the desire of all patriotic Bulgarians, but he explained that the existing international situation would not permit such a step because Bulgaria would be accused of endangering the peace by reopening the Eastern question. He firmly believed Bulgaria should remain a part of the Ottoman Empire because if any power declared war on Bulgaria, that would simultaneously involve Bulgaria's suzerain, the sultan, with all that that would entail for European di-

14 D. MARINOV, Stefan Stambolov i Noveishata Ni Istoria [Stefan Stambolov and our new history] (Sofia, 1909), pp. 686-88; and PANAIOTOV, p. 178.


16 Lowther to Rosebery, F.O. 78/4444, No. 167, Sofia, Dec. 2, 1892. In addition to Art. 38 there were twelve other articles introduced for amendment. None, however, was as vital as Art. 38.
diplomacy. As long as Russo-Bulgarian relations did not improve and while Turkey was maintaining a sincere and friendly policy toward her vassal, Bulgaria should not sever the bonds which tied her to the Ottoman Empire. If, Stambolov argued further, the prince had been recognized by the great powers and his suzerain, then, no doubt, a marriage could have been arranged without a change in the constitution. Since the question of recognition might drag on for years, the constitution had to be amended to permit the prince to marry and establish a dynasty.\(^17\)

Not only were the Bulgarian representatives astounded at this proposal, but the two foreign supporters of the regime, Great Britain and Austria-Hungary, who encouraged Bulgarian resistance to Russia whenever and wherever possible, found Stambolov’s suggestion incomprehensible. The British considered the plan ill-timed and ill-advised; they feared that it might even provide an excuse for Russian interference in Bulgaria.\(^18\) The Austrians were particularly disturbed because they believed that Russia would consider them the instigators of an “attentat against Orthodoxy” and of a plot to deliver Bulgaria to catholicism.\(^19\) Both Austria and Britain questioned the wisdom of arousing the Bulgarian clergy, who were believed to be extremely sympathetic to the Russian point of view. To such criticisms, Stambolov replied that the priests “were merely peasants who did not have any influence or enjoy any popularity.”\(^20\) Moreover, he maintained that the Bulgarians would allow no interference from the Russian church, since they considered their church older than the Russian. He admitted that the Russian government might protest, but with what validity? It could hardly object to the religion of the children of a prince whom it had declined to recognize for six years. Notwithstanding these assurances, both powers considered the measure unfortunate.

Stambolov’s proposal was debated in the assembly for two weeks. During this period the opponents of the amendment were given ample opportunity to express their views. The rapidly dwindling numbers of the opposition, however, were no match for the well-organized political machine which Stambolov commanded. Consequently, when the measure was finally submitted to the representatives, they voted 245 to 13 to revise Article 38 to read as follows:\(^21\) “The Prince of Bulgaria shall profess none but the Orthodox faith. Only the Prince who, by election, has ascended the Bulgarian throne, if already professing some other Christian faith, then he and his first successor may remain in that faith.”

The final draft was a compromise, because only the first successor was allowed to profess the faith of his parents; those that followed would be Orthodox.

At the same time that the Bulgarian assembly was considering the change in the constitution, the Russian conservative press gave expression to its bitter disappointment with the Stambolov re-

\(^{17}\) PANAIOTOV, p. 179.

\(^{18}\) Lowther to Rosebery, F.O. 78/4444, No. 177, Sofia, Dec. 11, 1892.


\(^{20}\) Lowther to Rosebery, F.O. 78/4444, No. 176, Sofia, Dec. 9, 1892. On Dec. 7 the semiofficial newspaper Svoboda [Freedom] stated: “It is even advantageous to have a non-Orthodox prince, who acts as the protector, instead of, as in the case of Russia, posing as the head of the church” (Lowther to Rosebery, F.O. 78/4444, No. 172, Sofia, Dec. 8, 1892).

\(^{21}\) Lowther to Rosebery, F.O. 78/4444, No. 184, Sofia, Dec. 19, 1892; and No. 185, Sofia, Dec. 21, 1892.
The Russian government, in contrast, maintained a policy of absolute silence. From this negative attitude the British ambassador in St. Petersburg concluded that the tsar really intended to adhere to his avowed policy of nonintervention in Bulgarian affairs. Such, however, was not to be the case. The constitutional change had still to be approved by a specially elected grand national assembly, in spite of its passage by the regular assembly. The Russian government believed that it could influence the Bulgarian electorate to select delegates who would refuse to sanction the proposed amendment. The point of contact with the Bulgarian people was to be the Bulgarian clergy.

In the history of Russo-Bulgarian relations the strongest link between these two nations had always been religion. For many decades the Russian government had closely followed the Turkish persecution of the Balkan Christians and had at times rendered assistance. As a result, the Bulgarian clergy and people had come to recognize Russia as the leader of the Orthodox world. Many of the prominent Bulgarian ecclesiastical officials, who had received their training in Russia, were deeply devoted to her and appeared ready to follow her dictates in all matters. Thus the Russian government was led to believe that it could always rely on the Bulgarian Orthodox hierarchy to carry out its wishes among the Bulgarian people. The amendment of Article 38 was to put this assumption to a severe test.

At this time the religious leader of the Bulgarians was Exarch Josif, whose official residence was in Constantinople. Josif was regarded as a consistent supporter and admirer of Russia, and he was also a close friend of A. I. Nelidov, the Russian ambassador at the sultan’s court. When Stambolov announced his plan, the exarch registered a protest, stating that, since the constitutional change was essentially of a religious nature, the Bulgarian holy synod should be convened to consider it. In January 1893, the Bulgarian government learned that Nelidov, on instructions from his government, had urged Josif to oppose by every means in his power the change in the constitution, and, indeed, Josif did protest a second time to the Bulgarian government. It thus appeared at first glance as if the head of the Bulgarian church would be an ally of the Russian government in the controversy.

Meanwhile, Ferdinand and Stambolov, believing that the revision of Article 38 would be ratified by the Bulgarian electorate in spite of any organized Russian opposition, decided to lose no time in selecting a bride for the prince. In this matter also the Russian government placed as many obstacles as possible. When Alexander III heard that Ferdinand might marry a Bavarian princess, he immediately called upon William II to use his influence to prevent such an event. If an engagement were announced, the Russian minister to Bavaria, Baron Osten-Sachen, was instructed “at once to

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22 Russkaia Mysl’ [Russian thought], XIII, No. 12 (December 1892), 217-18; and Morier to Rosebery, F.O. 65/1421, No. 310, St. Petersburg, Dec. 20, 1892.

23 Morier to Rosebery, F.O. 65/1421, No. 310, St. Petersburg, Dec. 20, 1892.


25 Dering to Rosebery, F.O. 78/4506, No. 4, Sofia, Jan. 11, 1893.
leave Munich with the whole of his staff."  

Although thwarted in Bavaria, Ferdinand, nevertheless, was able to find a bride in Italy, and on February 14, 1893, his engagement to the Catholic Princess Marie Louise, the eldest daughter of the duke of Bourbon-Parma, was announced.

Faced with this fait accompli, the Russian government ended its silence and on March 5 sent a note to the great powers stating that the recent steps taken by the Bulgarian government were an attack on one of the bases of Bulgarian national life—the religion to which the Bulgarians owed so much. Russia would still adhere to her policy of noninterference, but, in view of her moral bonds with the Bulgarian people, her kinsmen by religion and race, she could not remain a silent witness to a measure calculated to undermine the religion of the principality. The note further claimed that the exarch had made representations to Sofia in an attempt to persuade the Bulgarian government to renounce the constitutional change and that almost all the metropolitans of Bulgaria had approved of this action. In conclusion the note implied that the exarch should close those parishes which supported Stambolov and should excommunicate those Bulgars who were willing to renounce their oldest and most sacred traditions for the sake of a dynasty.  

The Russian note was formulated in the belief that the exarch was firmly opposed to the constitutional amendment and that he was a loyal supporter of the tsar. In his youth Iosif had been a russophile because he believed that only Russia could enable Bulgaria to establish an exarchate and extend her religious jurisdiction over a wider area, in particular Macedonia.  

During the trying days of 1885–87, the exarch exerted his efforts toward effecting an understanding between the Russians and Bulgarians. In 1889 when Stambolov came into conflict with the church hierarchy, which insisted on mentioning the tsar's name in the religious service and not the prince's, the exarch tended to support his ecclesiastical subordinates, who considered Ferdinand a usurper. In the summer of 1890, however, the relations between the exarch and Stambolov improved when the latter was able to secure religious privileges in Macedonia from Turkey. This success was achieved in spite of outright Russian opposition. Thus, since the exarch's goal had always been the extension of Bulgarian influence in Macedonia and since Stambolov had proved his ability to further this design, Iosif no longer had a pressing reason for remaining an obedient servant of the tsar. In the same year

26 Dering to Rosebery, F.O. 78/4506, No. 17, Sofia, Feb. 7, 1893; Decrais to Develle, Vienna, Feb. 4, 1893, D.D.F., X, 232–33; Wolkenstein to Kalnoky, H.H.S., X, 94, Privatbrief, St. Petersburg, Mar. 11, 1893; Wolkenstein to Kalnoky, H.H.S., X, 94, Privatbrief, St. Petersburg, Mar. 16, 1893. Panaiotov (p. 177) asserts that the question of a marriage was discussed in London and Vienna in the summer of 1892 when Ferdinand visited those cities.

27 The complete text of the Russian note is to be found in Morier to Rosebery, F.O. 65/1446, No. 80, St. Petersburg, Mar. 6, 1893. The views of the great powers concerning this note are to be found in: Morier to Rosebery, F.O. 65/1446, No. 85, St. Petersburg, Mar. 16, 1893; Vauvineux to Develle, St. Petersburg, Mar. 11, 1893, D.D.F., X, 267–68; William Leonard Langer, The Franco-Russian alliance, 1890–1894 (Cambridge, 1929), pp. 280–82; and Johannes Lepsius, Albrecht Mendelssohn Bartholdy, and Friedrich Thimme (eds.), Die grosse Politik der europaischen Kabinette 1871–1914 (hereafter cited as “G.P.”) (Berlin, 1923), IX, 95–96 (Werder to Caprivi, St. Petersburg, Mar. 17, 1893).  

28 The standard work on Iosif is M. Arnaudov, Eksarkh Iosif i Bulgarskata Kulturna Borba sled Suzdavaneto na Eksarkliata, 1870–1915 [Exarch Iosif and the Bulgarian cultural struggle after the creation of the exarchate 1870–1915] (Sofia, 1940). To the best of my knowledge, only the first volume, covering the period up to 1885, has been published.

Stanev, pp. 109–10; Trifonov, pp. 137–46.
a formula was devised for mentioning Ferdinand in the religious ceremony.\textsuperscript{30}

Thus, although Iosif registered a protest against the constitutional change, it appears that he did so not as a sign of opposition to the Bulgarian government but because he was at first uninformed and uncertain of Stambolov’s motives in proposing the constitutional change and was afraid that it indeed might be an “attentat against Orthodoxy.” Once the exarch understood Stambolov’s real purpose, he informed the Bulgarian government that he personally would no longer oppose the amendment, although he believed that the matter should be referred to the Bulgarian holy synod for consideration.\textsuperscript{31}

Moreover, the impression given by the Russian note that the Bulgarian metropolitan and clergy were opposed to the change also proved to be false. Actually, only one metropolitan, Kliment of Trnovo, a fanatical russophile, openly denounced the action of the Bulgarian government. Kliment had led the short-lived pro-Russian government after the kidnapping of Alexander of Battenberg in 1886 and had later refused to mention Ferdinand in the religious services. His loyalty to Russia was beyond question. His biographer, Ju. Trifonov, insists that Kliment’s opposition to Article 38 was based on his fear of catholicism and that he believed that the marriage of Ferdinand, a Catholic, to a member of the same religion, would entrench catholicism in Bulgaria.\textsuperscript{32} He, like Pobedonostsev in Russia, was obsessed with the dread of Catholic infiltration into the Orthodox lands. Although the danger existed, Trifonov admits that its importance was exaggerated.\textsuperscript{33} When Kliment called upon the Bulgars to oppose the policy of their leaders, the members of his own metropolitanate repudiated him. When he was brought before the civil courts on the charge of having exceeded his ecclesiastical duties, the exarch’s protest in behalf of Kliment was distinctly of a mild nature, and its wording indicated that it was issued more on the basis of duty than of conviction.\textsuperscript{34}

The incident which confirmed the fact that the exarch was not a Russian tool but that he was ready openly to defy Russia took place when Ferdinand married Marie Louise on April 20, 1893. On the following day Iosif telegraphed his cordial congratulations to the royal couple. In addition, he communicated his message to every bishop in Bulgaria to show his complete reconciliation with the prince and the government.\textsuperscript{35} This

\textsuperscript{30} Trifonov, pp. 144–45. The Russian policy toward Macedonia in 1890 is indeed interesting. In the preceding two decades Russia had openly supported Bulgarian claims to Macedonia, but in 1890, owing to the deterioration of Russo-Bulgarian relations, Russia threw her weight behind Serbian aspirations to the same territory. Russia hoped by this policy to attack the Bulgarian government at its most sensitive point—Macedonia. Russia believed that in this manner she could force the Bulgarian government to succumb to Russian pressure. If this failed, Russia expected the Bulgars to overthrow their government when they saw Macedonia slipping from their grasp. This shift in Russian policy is thoroughly discussed in Slobodan Jovanović, Vlada Aleksandra Obrenovića [The government of Alexander Obrenović] (Belgrade, 1934), I, 160–63, and Panaiotov, pp. 126–27 and 167.

\textsuperscript{31} Dering to Rosebery, F.O. 78/4506, No. 4, Sofia, Jan. 11, 1893; Dering to Rosebery, F.O. 78/4506, No. 15, Sofia, Feb. 4, 1893; Cambon to Develle, Pera, Feb. 24, 1893, D.D.F., X, 249–50; and Velchev, pp. 39–41 and 51, who asserts that the sultan put pressure on the exarch which compelled the latter to alter his stand.

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., p. 151.

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., p. 151.

\textsuperscript{34} Dering to Rosebery, F.O. 78/4506, No. 35, Sofia, Mar. 12, 1893; Dering to Rosebery, F.O. 78/4506, No. 33, Sofia, Mar. 6, 1893; Trifonov, pp. 160 and 166; and Velchev, p. 63.

\textsuperscript{35} Dering to Rosebery, F.O. 78/4508, Tel. No. 14, Sofia, Apr. 22, 1893.
step, which was considered by the Bulgarian government to be the first official recognition of Ferdinand by the exarch, was of considerable political significance, especially since it followed the Russian campaign to block the constitutional amendment and thereby prevent the marriage. On April 21 the semiofficial Bulgarian newspaper Svoboda jubilantly announced that by this action the exarch showed that he no longer was laboring under false advice.

The exarch was ready to go even one step further to demonstrate his reconciliation with the Bulgarian government. Not being in the best of health, he desired to visit Austria for medical treatment. He wished to schedule his trip to coincide with Ferdinand’s return from Italy in order that he could meet the prince. He would thus also be able to preside at the religious ceremony which was to be held in honor of the royal couple upon their entry into Sofia on June 10. Although this plan was never carried through, because of the refusal of the sultan to grant Josif a passport, it did establish the fact that the exarch now gave his support to Ferdinand’s government.

The action of the Austrian government also disturbed the Russian government. On their way to Italy for the marriage, both Ferdinand and Stambolov had been received by Franz Josef and Gustav Kalnoky. This step was condemned by the Russians, especially in view of the fact that an attempt to improve Austro-Russian relations was in progress at that time. The cordial reception given the Bulgarian leaders in Vienna certainly did not help the negotiations.

The only triumph which Russia could claim at this time was that she had succeeded in preventing Ferdinand and his bride from returning to Bulgaria through Constantinople. The proud prince, wishing that his bride’s first impression of his principality be most favorable, desired to sail through the Straits and disembark on the attractive Black Sea coast. If this scheme were carried out, diplomatic protocol would demand that the prince pay his respects to his country’s suzerain, the sultan. When Russia learned of this plan, she considered that such an audience would mark another step toward Ferdinand’s recognition. Therefore, the Russian ambassador was instructed to inform the Porte that if the visit should take place, the ambassador would immediately leave Constantinople. The other great powers, realizing that the plan would be considered a personal affront to Alexander and possibly could even antagonize him to the point where he would take some unforeseen action, advised the sultan to comply with the tsar’s wish. Consequently, Ferdinand was informed...
that he would not be granted passage through the Straits.9

Thus, although the Russian government was able to prevent Ferdinand's trip, it failed in its major plan, which was to obtain the co-operation of the Bulgarian clergy, in particular the exarch, and the Bulgarian people in its campaign to thwart the constitutional change and thereby prevent the marriage. Russia had again misjudged the trend of public opinion in Bulgaria. The Russian government had been convinced that it could dictate to the Bulgarian electorate through the exarch, but the latter had proved that he was first and foremost the religious leader of the Bulgarians. He, too, now recognized the advantages of the security and stability which an established dynasty would offer his country. Since Stambolov had proved that by his pro-Turkish policy he could obtain religious concessions from Turkey without Russian support, the exarch saw no reason to abandon the Bulgarian government merely to satisfy Alexander III.

The favorable settlement of the constitutional problem marked the height of Stambolov's career. He had ignored the advice of Austria-Hungary, Great Britain, and his closest advisers by challenging Russia in the religious sphere, where she was believed to have almost absolute authority. During his tenure in office, Stambolov gained dictatorial powers, and, in general, his opinions prevailed in all matters. Even a prominent Russian foreign office official believed that "der Prinz Ferdinand sei gar nichts, Stambolov aber alles."40 It is very probable that Stambolov could have forced the amendment through, even had the electorate not been so co-operative. But the Bulgarian people, too, wished to see a relaxation of the tension and pressure, principally created by Russia, which existed in their state. Therefore, in May 1893, they elected representatives to the grand national assembly which, on May 28, overwhelmingly ratified the constitutional amendment. As a result of this episode, both Prince Ferdinand and Stambolov gained greater prestige and emerged strengthened not only in their position inside Bulgaria but also in their relations with Russia and Turkey.

Stambolov's success was a bitter blow to Alexander III. His reign had been punctuated by repeated rebuffs at the hands of the Bulgarian leaders, whom he hated so intensely that he would not permit the names of two, Ferdinand and Stambolov, to be mentioned in his presence. Although he pursued a nationalistic policy himself, he could not understand that the Bulgarians could have a similar policy and that they would not willingly exchange Turkish for Russian overlordship. To the end of his reign Alexander refused to recognize that the Bulgarian people really supported the independent policy of their government. He preferred to imagine that Ferdinand and Stambolov were actually blocking the true desires of the Bulgarian people, and he steadfastly adhered to his previous program of not recognizing the prince and not resuming diplomatic relations with his government.41

40 Wolkenstein to Kalnoky, H.H.S., X, 94, Privatbrief, St. Petersburg, Mar. 24, 1893. Velchev vehemently condemns Stambolov's dictatorial methods.

41 Whereas Alexander looked at the Bulgarian situation with great foreboding, a segment of the Russian press, in particular, the journal Viestnik Evropy [The messenger of Europe], looked at the problem very realistically. Viestnik Evropy criticized the conservative journals and thus indirectly condemned the tsar also. It commented that the con-
The re-establishment of cordial relations between Bulgaria and Russia was forced to wait until both the protagonists of the policy of mutual hostility had left the scene. Stambolov, the guiding spirit in Bulgaria of resistance to Russian pressure, was forced out of office in May 1894. His dismissal was followed seven months later by the death of Alexander III. With the principal opponents of reconciliation no longer in office, Russo-Bulgarian relations were soon again on a normal diplomatic footing. In February 1896, Ferdinand gave up the privilege he had won with the amendment of Article 38 and had his first son, Boris, who already had been christened a Catholic, rechristened in the Orthodox church. This removed the last principal barrier to a reconciliation and led to the immediate restoration of diplomatic relations.

The re-establishment of friendly relations with Bulgaria was necessitated also by the reorientation of Russian foreign policy in the last decade of the century. The shift of emphasis to the Far East led the Russian government to desire to put the “Balkans on ice” through an agreement with Austria-Hungary. Before such a settlement could be completed, it was felt essential that all sources of friction in the Balkans be first removed. The reconciliation with the government of Prince Ferdinand was thus deemed of prime importance. Once this had been achieved, Nicholas II and Franz Josef were able to agree, in April 1897, on the maintenance of the status quo in the Balkans, a policy which remained in force until 1908.

Despite the resumption of outwardly friendly relations, the bonds between Bulgaria and Russia were not to be so cordial as they had been in the period preceding the Bulgarian liberation. The Russian government had thrown away a golden opportunity. The people and the leaders of the new state had been filled with enthusiasm and friendship for Russia. Indeed, it was not ingratitude which turned the Bulgars away from the Russians, but rather nationalism, vanity, and stubbornness, coupled with Russian overbearance and misunderstanding of Bulgarian national aspirations. In 1885 Alexander had written that the Slavs must now serve Russia; in practice this doctrine reminded the Bulgars of the previous decades when they were still subjects of the sultan. Once liberated, they were determined to have a truly independent state, not one which was free in theory but in reality was little more than another province of the tsar.