

Ljubodrag P. RISTIĆ
Institute for Balkan Studies
Belgrade

SERBO-RUSSIAN RELATIONS FROM 1856 TO 1862 ACCORDING TO REPORTS BY BRITISH CONSULS IN BELGRADE

Abstract: Despite the results of the Crimean War and the Paris Peace Treaty (1856), British influence in the Principality of Serbia could not have been extended to the point of competing with that of Russia. British consuls soon perceived that the activity of Russian agents was aimed to gradually undermine the 1856 Treaty and disturb Turkey. Neither Fonblanque, nor Lytton or Longworth were diplomatically weighty enough to impede Russian influence.

The Crimean War was longer in duration and bloodier than solitary Russia and her four adversaries had expected. The persistence of each side to end the war by inflicting military or diplomatic defeat on the adversary prolonged the war for three years. Finally, after the allies proved themselves superior, the parties to the war sat at a negotiating table in Paris, on February 25, 1856. A peace treaty was concluded on March 30, 1856. Only those less informed could have thought that the Principality of Serbia would become involved in the war. Russia first advised Serbia to stand aside, only to ask her afterwards to join. The movements of Austrian troops toward the Sava and Danube rivers posed an open threat to Serbia. France and Great Britain tried to draw her in on their side, but were nonetheless content with her non-interference. Even if there had been no external pressures, internal circumstances in Serbia and her unpreparedness for war were such that war could be conceived only in the event that Serbia herself was assaulted.

However, considering that the Principality of Serbia was still a vassal of Turkey and that Paris strove to avoid any reason for fresh conflict, Articles 28 and 29 of the Paris Peace Treaty stipulated the po-

sition of the Principality of Serbia. According to Article 28, Serbia remained a vassal state with the recognition of "son administration indépendante et nationale, ainsi que la pleine liberté de culte, de législation, de commerce et de navigation". The next article stipulated that Turkish garrisons were to remain deployed in Serbian forts, but that no armed intervention could be launched against Serbia without previous agreement between the signatories to the Treaty.¹

The then British consul general in the Principality of Serbia, the elderly and not very able Thomas de Grènier de Fonblanque, was to implement two chief tasks: to hinder everything that might shake Turkey and explore possibilities for the penetration of British capital. His reports were frequent, though not providing as much information as might have been expected of one who had spent fourteen years as consul in Belgrade.² His long-term service and the experience of his country in affairs with Russia have taught him that Russia was a dangerous and sinewy adversary. His reports on Russia's influence in Serbia sometimes seem Russo-phobic, but then he often had reason to be. In March 1856, Toma Vučić-Perišić requested from Vienna that the new Russian consul general in Belgrade be received with such ceremony that, as Fonblanque described, would be "too much for an Emperor on his Passage after the conquest of Kingdoms".³ On the arrival of the new Russian consul general Colonel Milošević, the hoisting of the Russian consular flag was greeted among the populace with such joy, and an unusual ceremony offering blessings to the flag. It was open defiance toward Turkey.⁴ At the time, many young Serbs requested scholarships from the Russian emperor to join Russian military academies.⁵ Substantiating his claim that the disposition of the Serbian people toward Russia could not be weakened even by the Austrophil policy of those who ruled Serbia,⁶ Fonblanque cabled the Foreign Of-

1 Noradounghian, Gabriel effendi. *Recueil d'actes internationaux de l'Empire Ottoman*, IIIe tome 1856-1878, Paris 1902, 78.

2 Fonblanque was appointed consul in Serbia in the summer of 1841; he arrived in Zemun in the spring of 1842, and moved into his residence in Belgrade in the beginning of 1843 (Stevan K. Pavlowitch, *Anglo-Russian Rivalry in Serbia 1837-1839. The Mission of Colonel Hodges*, Paris 1961, 182).

3 Fonblanque to Redcliffe (Stratford de Redcliffe), April 31, 1856, Belgrade, Foreign Office (FO further in the text) 78/1197.

4 Fonblanque to Clarendon (George William Frederich Villiers, Earl of Clarendon), October 30, 1856, Belgrade, FO 78/1198.

5 Fonblanque to Foreign Office, October 30, 1856, Belgrade FO 78/1198.

6 Fonblanque to Redcliffe, March 26, 1856, Belgrade, FO 78/1197.

fice that the Belgian ambassador to Istanbul, Blondell de Cuelbroeck, on a brief visit to Belgrade, had said the Serbs were very disposed toward Russia.⁷ Fonblanque correctly ascertained that Russia and Austria were battling for greater influence in Serbia. He thought it would be better if Austrian influence prevailed, as it would be less detrimental. Though he scarcely believed this possible, despite the fact that Russia could during its protectorate do more for the improvement of Serbia's position. Russia needed Serbia, Fonblanque accused, merely to disturb and debilitate Turkey.⁸

The British consul was convinced that sympathies for Russia were built on hatred toward Austria, admitting to being baffled over why the pro-French stream had sunk into the pro-Russian. The new Russian consul, Colonel Milošević, did not leave the impression of a capable diplomat, so his British counterpart inferred that the former would not remain in Serbia for long. Fonblanque believed his mission was to investigate the disposition of the Serbs toward the Russian government and, till better times, to implement the policy of "agitation". Milošević himself contributed to this opinion. While saying that Serbs were a specially good people, but dissatisfied, remaining quiet though no one was forcing them to, he claimed, on the other hand, that the Serbs would lose all their freedoms if they allowed foreign powers to interfere. He was referring to a neglect of the provisions of the Paris Treaty.⁹ It appears Fonblanque was surprised that so soon after peace had been concluded, Russia dared to work on breaking it. So he hastened with his reports on Russia's propaganda that was inducing Serbia to seek its future in direct Russo-Turkish negotiations. It was even worse when three Russian officers of Serbian origin, in order to draw to their side Serbs who went to school in France, said "the South-Slavs must look for rescue, quite as much towards Paris as to the more northern, and natural Direction".¹⁰

7 Fonblanque to Foreign Office, November 28, 1856, Belgrade, FO 78/1198.

8 Fonblanque to Redcliffe, April 12 and 25, July 16 and August 19, 1856, Belgrade, FO 78/1198.

9 Fonblanque to Clarendon, March 10, 1857, Belgrade, FO 78/1287. Consul Fonblanque saw Russia as a dangerous adversary to his country but also underestimated the Russians. He says in the same letter: "My belief in Russian aptitude for civilisation is the same which I entertain of Negro capacity for Abstract Mathematics: though I can claim to know more of Russian than of coloured men."

10 Fonblanque to Clarendon, June 10 and 17, 1857, Belgrade FO 195/556; Fonblanque to Redcliffe, June 11 and 21, 1857, Belgrade, FO 78/1288.

British reports from Belgrade contain no trace of the struggle between the Prince and Council. Perhaps Consul Fonblanque's superiors in Istanbul and London did not request for such an analysis or he himself did not consider it important for his country's politics. However, in June 1857, he wrote, not without reason, that both sons of Prince Alexander were of such intellectual and physical capacity that neither would be fit to rule, and named as many as seven candidates to the throne: Stefan Stefanović - Tenka, Aleksa Simić, Pavle Stanišić, Jovan Ristić, Dimitrije Crnobarac, Konstantin Nikolajević and Milivoje Petrović Blaznavac.¹¹

It appears Fonblanque was not very surprised when Tenka's conspiracy was foiled in October 1857 and many men at the top of Serbia's political pyramid arrested. Most of the prisoners were inclined toward Russia and hoped she would depose Prince Alexander and reinstate Miloš Obrenović. As it was said openly in public that the men were Russophiles, consul Milošević protested against allegations that the Russian government instigated the plan for the murder of Prince Alexander. Acting on instructions received from the Foreign Office, Fonblanque intervened with Prince Alexander, conveying hope from his government that only those found guilty beyond doubt would be convicted and warned that councillors cannot be punished before the Porte was consulted. This was not a humanistic move by the British diplomacy. Britain was much concerned lest the convictions overfill the glass of discontent among the Serbian opposition and disorders break out on a broader scale. Moreso that Serbia should, in such a storm, completely fall under Russia's influence, which Fonblanque indicated might happen.¹²

In early 1858, Fonblanque reported that Russia's influence in Serbia was growing. Russia objected to any collective action by the Great Powers in Serbia. Gradually, Prince Alexander was turning toward Russia, probably, according to Fonblanque, because of Austria's position regarding Serbia's rights in regulating navigation along the Danube. Thus Fonblanque concluded it would be very useful if Ethem Pasha's planned mission were carried out. Reconciling the quarrelling sides in Serbia would not only calm down the situation, but develop a

11 Fonblanque to Redcliffe, June 21, 1857, Belgrade, FO 78/1288.

12 Fonblanque to Clarendon, October 9, 12 and 22, 1857, Belgrade, FO 78/1288; Fonblanque to Redcliffe, October 16 and 22 and November 9, 1857, FO 78/556 and 78/1288; Clarendon to Redcliffe, November 11, 1857, FO 195/556.

feeling of indebtedness and gratitude within Serbia toward the Porte. With this, and certain reforms, Turkey might pull Serbia away from Russia's influence and "interrupt the Pan-Slavistic Current to the South-East and South-West of Belgrade".¹³

Fonblanque wrote neither frequently nor in detail of Etem Pasha's doings in Belgrade. Writing at the beginning of the year that he had been, by the way, informed that the Turkish commissioner was to work by his counsel, and, saying, at the end of the year, incidentally, in a memoir, that he was the chief advisor to Ethem Pasha, would mean he had considerable influence over or at least had consultations with Ethem Pasha.¹⁴

In the evening of May 26, 1858 Fonblanque was fiercely assaulted in Kalemegdan park by an Albanian working for the Turks. He was lucky, as, two Belgrade students in the vicinity saved his life. Fear of the Albanian aroused gratitude toward the Belgraders, the efficaciousness of the Badgastein or the talks he conducted in Munich, Vienna, Pest or Constantinople, or all these together, affected Fonblanque that he wrote several retrospective memoirs and reports with a realistic view of the situation in and around Serbia. He saw Austria as the chief foreign political cause of instability in Serbia which supported Prince Alexander. On the opening of the St. Andrew's Assembly on November 30, 1858 Fonblanque wrote from Constantinople that an insurrection could break out easily in Serbia if Prince Alexander remained on the throne. He believed the danger far exceeded the boundaries of Serbia. "To my conviction, there is no safety for the Principle of Ottoman Territorial Integrity so long as Alexandar Petrovits Kara-Giurgevits is permitted to retain the Title of Prince of Servia", wrote Fonblanque. If Turkey would oppose the return of the Obrenović dynasty and put up its own candidate, the Serbs, aided by Russia, would turn against their suzerain. If an insurrection should break out in Serbia, Austria would try to pacify it, and Russia would surely become involved. That would mean, thought Fonblanque, the breaking up of the European part of the Ottoman Empire owing to

13 Fonblanque to Clarendon, January 30 and February 5, 1858, Belgrade, FO 78/1376; Fonblanque to Alison (Charles Alison), February 24 and 25, and March 25, 1858, Belgrade, FO 78/1376.

14 Fonblanque to Clarendon, February 5, 1858, Belgrade, FO 78/1376; Mr de Fonblanque's Memorandum on Mr Dalvell's Correspondence from Belgrade and of the Tendencies of Servian Policy, December 14, 1858, Constantinople, FO 195/583.

"miscalculations of the Sultan's Ally at Vienna", not on account of Russia's intrigues, as the Vienna press claimed.¹⁵ The reversal in Fonblanque's interpretation of the crisis in Serbia and seeking the culprit were obvious.

A brief period had elapsed since the return of Miloš Obrenović to Serbia until Fonblanque's initial negative assessments of Miloš's personality and governing. Perhaps the second accession of Prince Miloš was directly or indirectly financially supported by Russia. However, Fonblanque surely exaggerated when he said that Russia's supervision and aid enabled Prince Miloš to strive solely to reign with the scepter of Tsar Dušan.¹⁶ Before his return to Serbia, Prince Miloš had made his intention clear to rule autocratically, as he did in his previous reign. He was unable, during his entire second reign, to adjust to all the changes that took place during his twenty-year absence. But he, too, as many Romanians, Italians, Hungarians, and, of course, other Serbs, strove toward one goal: the unification and independence of his people. The Prince's irascible disposition became more prominent in the latter years of his life, and the undiplomatic conduct of his affairs were not infrequent. The fact that the obstinate Prince dismissed the Russian consul from his first audience and that he terrified the pasha in Belgrade by stating that the only treaty was the one he himself recognized, convinced even more the British consul that he had been correct in his reports.¹⁷ Namely, he believed that Prince Miloš should be forced to abdicate and leave Serbia. He should be succeeded by his son Mihailo who would wisely channel Russian influence in Serbia and would not be an instrument in the hands of Russia, like his father.¹⁸

15 Fonblanque to Bulwer (Henry Lytton Bulwer), November 30, 1858, Constantinople, FO 195/583.

16 Fonblanque to Malmesbury (James Howard Harris, 3rd Earl of Malmesbury), March 31, 1859, Belgrade, FO 78/1439.

17 Fonblanque to Malmesbury, April 15, 1859, Belgrade, FO 78/1439; Fonblanque quoted Prince Miloš as telling Osman Pasha: "...You allude to treaties! I could tell you what Treaties are to me. The valid Treaties are made by myself - by my own and single Will!" Fonblanque reported in August, "...even in a written Manifesto, sent to the Porte early in March last, Milosch denied being subject to any kind of Control; Declared he would Govern according to his own Will, - and only yield to Military Force when this should be proved more efficient than that which he could oppose to it; - and, finally prescribing // that any Foreign Representatives who asked what his Intentions were? - might be furnished with Copies of the Declaratory-Act then transmitted." Fonblanque to Bulwer, August 3, 1859, Vienna, FO 78/1440.

18 Fonblanque to Bulwer, April 15, 1859, Belgrade, FO 195/651; Letter cited dates August 3, 1859.

The fact that Fonblanque was erroneous in his assessments is his claim that he, of all the consuls, was best informed about the developments in the Assembly of the Virgin Mary's Nativity. During the Assembly's session in Kragujevac, where a foreigner was permitted to stay only 24 hours, under strict police supervision, Fonblanque was most interested in: the extent of Russia's influence, changing Art. 17 of the 1838 Constitution¹⁹ and establishing the right of succession for the Obrenović family. Fonblanque believed that Russian propaganda in the European provinces of the Ottoman Empire had become strongly influential, leading rapidly to a conflict between the Slavic population in the Empire and the Porte. He described Russian politics in the Balkans: "I think Russia's objects on this reference will be satisfied with less trouble and at a smaller cost after the first disruption in Turkey, - with the Prestige she is quite sure of in such a Physical-Force Kingdom of Grand-Duchy of Servia - with a ruder (but still Popular) kind of Federalism in Bosnia and Bulgaria, and all which would increase her Faculty of Regulating a fine balance-wheel amongst the lax Governing Classes in Moldavia and Wallachia, where there is only a remote likelihood of the People ever asserting itself or counting for anything beyond unwilling Production - in the Institutions".²⁰ When the legislation on succession was promulgated, Fonblanque sent a translation of the document to Russell, stressing that its illegalities rendered analysis impossible.²¹

Fonblanque's reports proved not only that he was not the most well-informed consul of the developments in Kragujevac, but that the Russian consul Milošević was in Kragujevac, and had allegedly prevented the proclamation of Prince Miloš as dictator and considerably influenced the work of the Assembly. On the last day of 1859, Fonblanque wrote there would be no crisis in Serbia unless the Prince died. Even then, Russia was contemplating another candidate for Serbia's princely throne.²²

19 Fonblanque to Russell (John Russell), September 27 and October 13, 1859, Belgrade, FO 78/1440. Article 17 of the Constitution reads: "The 17 members of the Council will not be dismissed without a reason, until it was proved by the sublime Porte, that they had committed a violation of the law and national decrees". From *Устави Кнежевине и Краљевине Србије 1835-1903*, САНУ, Одељење друштвених наука, Извори српског права VII, Београд 1988, 72. An amendment to this article could have altered the balance of forces in Serbia to the advantage of the Prince which would have caused much discontent in Turkey and Russia, and, in view of possible consequences, the other guarantee powers.

20 Fonblanque to Russell, October 28, 1859, Belgrade, FO 78/1440

21 Fonblanque to Russell, November 21, 1859, Belgrade, FO 78/1440

22 Fonblanque to Foreign Office, December 30, 1859, Belgrade, FO 78/1440

Toward the end of 1859, Fonblanque was seriously taken ill. Some said it was because of the beating he got in Kalemegdan park. As he was bedridden, a new man was charged with conducting affairs at the British consulate in Belgrade. Lytton's reports as of February 19, 1860, showed he had a turn for analysis.

Several of his reports gave clear indications of preparations for an insurrection against the Turkish authorities in the Turkish provinces around Serbia. Lytton inferred that an insurrection was looming and that Turkey was endeavoring to prevent it. He saw two sources of danger. The first was the plainly visible discontent among the population, though it was too late to determine the causes. The second source of danger composed two parts: the politics of Prince Miloš and, Russian politics. Prince Miloš could choose whether to be vassal to a weak Turkey or to be under the cap of a strong Russia. There were several reasons why Lytton believed Miloš would remain neutral. First, he refused several addresses of dissatisfied Christians from the neighboring provinces. Second, the Prince was old, and naturally would want to spend his declining years in peace. Third, and most important, was the Prince's experience with Russia, which taught him "that the ambition of that Power is incompatible with his own". The Prince was intimidated by this and did not want Turkey disintegrated. Nonetheless, if an insurrection should break out, the Prince would be compelled to decide whether to lead it or let it ride by events. He would not hesitate to lead the insurrection, thought Lytton, but would sooner reach his aim "through fear of an insurrection, then by insurrection itself". Russia desired that the dissatisfied population rebel, do as much as it can with its own forces, and finally be liberated with Russia's assistance. Thus Lytton formulated Russia's policy in the words of her agents in Serbia: "The dissolution of the Ottoman Empire must come from within and not from without. Let us therefore encourage insurrection and ensure its success".²³ Considering it his duty to depict the situation in Serbia before leaving Belgrade, Lytton compiled an extensive report, with a more penetrating analysis. At a time when Prince Miloš was preparing a deputation to Constantinople charged with setting specific demands, and when news of national fermentation in Europe inebriated the Balkan leaders, Lytton did not find it difficult to formulate and expound on four problems pertaining to Serbia that might shake Turkey: Turks

23 Lytton to Bulwer, February 19, 1860, Belgrade, FO 195/651.

in Serbia in and around fortresses, a change of the 1838 Constitution, succession of the princely dignity, and, what seemed most crucial, possible insurrection in the neighboring Turkish provinces. Lytton was informed that Russia was not sending arms to Serbia but was, however, sending large sums of money. In the analysis, Lytton was more acute in his assessments of the Prince's activities when he claimed that the Prince was encouraging movements in neighboring provinces to win certain concessions from an intimidated Turkey.²⁴

Lytton stayed on in Belgrade to see to the burial of his senior colleague and await the newly appointed consul Longworth. Longworth fell to work vigorously on reading the archives of his predecessors, and, analyzing the situation more wisely than Lytton, inferred that the Russian Prince Dolgoruky arrived in Belgrade in February 1860 not to stir up hopes for an insurrection, but to curb passions among the insurgents and within the Prince's milieu.²⁵

The new British consul did not have the opportunity to become better acquainted with Prince Miloš, who, old and ill, only received the Russian consul. So Longworth had talks with prince Mihailo who said he did not believe Serbia would have any advantages from a new war between Russia and Turkey, adding, "Je sais bien que ce n'est pas pour nos beaux yeux que la Russie fera la guerre a la Turquie". Although he did not trust prince Mihailo, Longworth was happy to hear this.²⁶ The further development of events led Longworth to think now that the Prince was inclined toward Russia, then to believe that he was unable to resist the strong pro-Russian party. A group of Turks murdered on the coast of the Sava River beneath the fortress of Belgrade, then, an increasing number of refugees, particularly from Bulgarian regions, intermittent skirmishes on the border with Turkey and Aksakov's pan-Slavic propaganda, convinced Longworth that the Serbian police was controlled by Milošević. He even thought investigation would yield evidence showing Milošević's involvement in the murders on the Sava coast.²⁷

Longworth was very unhappy over prince Mihailo's growing compliance with the Russian party. He felt the pro-Russian stream in-

24 Lytton to Bulwer, March 19, 1860, Belgrade, FO 195/651.

25 Longworth to Russell, April 10, 1860, Belgrade, FO 78/1515.

26 Longworth to Bulwer and Russel, May 23, 1860, Belgrade, FO 78/1515.

27 Longworth to ?, June 28, 1860, Belgrade, FO 78/1515; Longworth to Bulwer, August 2 and 9, 1860, Belgrade, FO 78/1515; Longworth to Russell, August 27, 1860, Belgrade, FO 78/1515.

tensify because he could not come by information unless he paid for it. However, a report that prince Mihailo had received instructions from Britain's ambassador to Constantinople Henry Bulwer in September 1860 and said that Bulwer's counsels were in accordance with his views, was a ray of hope. Longworth thus thought prince Mihailo "may perhaps wish to moderate the action of the Russian party without venturing to come to an open rupture with them".²⁸ When prince Mihailo strove to consolidate power immediately after his father's death, Longworth reported that the question of the succession was not so important that the Porte should not yield, and recognize prince Mihailo succession to the throne, to pacify the situation in and around Serbia.²⁹ When Prince Mihailo formed the new government, Longworth gained the impression that he had turned his back slightly on Russia. Longworth seems to have believed that the new Prince was not at home in the existing set of circumstances, "I fear that a good deal of what was merely ambiguous in his conduct may be now more unfavorably characterized. It would seem as if he had been tampering with all parties; to the Russian, though avoiding a rupture, his attitude has been reserved, while towards the Porte it has been by turns forward and conciliatory: baffled however in this double game he has now recourse to her adversaries who if I am not deceived must as consequence of their own manoeuvres have anticipated and been waiting for his overtures".³⁰

In December, 1860, Longworth could not learn what the state advisor, Jovan Marinović, would attempt to procure by visiting European courts. He could only presume that he would try to win support for Serbia's demands sent to the Porte - primarily, recognition for succession to the princely throne.³¹ At the close of January, 1861, Longworth had reason to believe that Jovan Marinović had failed to obtain what he had hoped for in St. Petersburg. Nevertheless, influence of the Russian party increased, and its leaders, Stevča Mihajlović and Metropolitan Mihailo, were instruments of the Russian consul general. At his instructions, a large number of emissaries had left Belgrade to collect information and incite the dissatisfied population in Bosnia, Bulgaria and Albania.³² So, mildly speaking, it was unusual that the new Rus-

28 Longworth to Bulwer, September 19, 1860, Belgrade, FO 78/1515.

29 Longworth to Russell, October 22, 1860, Belgrade, FO 78/1515; Ibid - Bulwer, November 16 and December 3, 1860, Belgrade, FO 78/1515/

30 Letter from December 3, 1860.

31 Ibid; Longworth to Russel, December 6, 1860, Belgrade, FO 78/1515.

32 Longworth to Bulwer, January 29, 1861, Belgrade FO 78/1585.

sian consul, Vlangaly, expressed to Longworth "his surprise that people should imagine there was such a thing as a Russian party here; and what was still more amusing" continued Longworth in his report, "he said a Servian warned him against too freely communicating with another Servian because he did not belong to that party. The fact is that Mr Vlangaly rather overdoes the part of a passive observer of events which he has probably been instructed to assume; that of a too zealous agitator played by his predecessor having in some degree compromised his government".³³ At the same time, Longworth began to suspect that the Russia's and Austria's policies toward Serbia were coming closer to each other. He became convinced of this when Austria permitted Serbia to import arms when there were sure signs that a movement for national liberation was strengthening in Serbia.³⁴

The advent of spring brought on more problems. Refugees, fleeing mostly across the eastern border of Serbia, were becoming a pressing problem. In June, 1861, Prince Mihailo complained to Longworth that Russia, by driving out Tatars from the Crimea and filling in the void with Bulgarians, was solving its own problems and adhering to its policy of undermining Turkey from within. The fact that this caused trouble for Serbia, Russia did not mind. This further put off Prince Mihailo from Russian policy. When he realized that the preparedness of his army was far below the necessary standard, he tried to establish order on Serbia's borders and suppress the agitation of Russian agents.³⁵

Longworth was wrong when he wrote that the so-called "Russian party" had subsided before the convening of the Assembly of Transfiguration.³⁶ After the Assembly closed, he reported that the stream Vlangaly referred to as the "democratic party" in the Assembly, had emerged as the only opposition to the Prince's illegal measures. Analyzing the causes of conflict between the "Russian party" and Prince Mihailo, Longworth said rumor had it in Belgrade that Russia was willing to support a foreign candidate to the Serbian throne. Moreso,

33 Longworth to Bulwer, February 18, 1861, Belgrade FO 78/1585.

34 Ibid: Initial news of this date from November 1860 and in February 1861 Longworth has the information that France and Russia agree that Austria occupy Bosnia (Longworth - Bulwer, November 1, 1860, Zemun, FO 195/651; Longworth to Foreign Office, February 19, 1861, Belgrade, FO 195/686; Longworth to Russell, May 31, 1861, Belgrade, FO 78/1585.

35 Longworth to Bulwer, June 25, 1861, Belgrade, FO 78/1585.

36 Longworth to Bulwer, August 3, 1861, Belgrade, FO 78/1585.

he learned that the "Russian party" and friends of the former prince, Alexander Karadjordjević, were hatching a conspiracy.³⁷

Longworth underscored more than once that the decisions adopted by the Transfiguration Assembly were contrary to Turkey's international obligations, which were, of course, binding for Serbia. The best and least perilous, thought Longworth, would have been if the prince had respected his commitment and unreservedly placed himself under the protection of the Porte. But, said Longworth, "he had preferred however being a vassal of Russia or of France who alternately and by agreement, it would appear, dictate the program of the measures to be pursued here". It seemed then that a new threat had emerged for Britain's policy of calming the situation in Serbia. French colonel Hipolit Mondain had been appointed army minister.³⁸

Longworth and Conrad Vasić, the Austrian charge d'affaires, were instructed by their governments to submit a memorandum to the Prince, which they did, at the end of 1861, protesting the unlawful decisions of the Transfiguration Assembly. In talks with Prince Mihailo and Ilija Garašanin, Longworth asserted that they knew their arguments were not irrefutable. But the support they had, Longworth was sure, from Russia and France, enabled them to abide by their decisions.³⁹ At the instructions of his superior from Constantinople, Sir Henry Bulwer, Longworth reiterated Britain's warnings to Ilija Garašanin and Prince Mihailo. Garašanin attached importance to a reorganization of the national army, insisting it was imperative to Serbia because of the developments in her vicinity. During talks with Prince Mihailo, Longworth noticed that the national army in itself posed a threat as Serbia had no resources to arm, clothe, feed or pay it, thus such a situation might be taken advantage of. "His Highness could not fail to perceive that my observation applied more particularly to the Russian party to whose plots and intrigues he is aware I (Longworth, Lj.R) have always given him credit for opposing some resistance. It must at the same time served as a hint if the idea had not before occurred to him that the ready acquiescence of Russia in the militia scheme though a ground of additional confidence as regards the Porte,

37 Longworth to Bulwer, September 16, 1861, Belgrade, FO 78/1585.

38 Longworth to Bulwer, October 28 and 30, 1861, Belgrade, FO 78/1720 and FO 195/686.

39 Longworth to ?, January 4, 1862, Longworth to Russell, January 25, 1862, Belgrade FO 78/1672.

must justify alarm as to her own designs in connection with it", said Longworth, inferring that the Prince was still undecided on the question of the national army.⁴⁰

Having established that the organization of the Serbian army was part of a preparation to destroy and divide the Ottoman Empire, Russell proposed to Austria a new joint step. In keeping with this, Longworth received instructions from the Foreign Office in April 1862, to point out to Prince Mihailo, at every convenient moment, that internal administration in Serbia was in fact independent and that a Russian yoke would be more fierce than the nominal tax Serbia was paying in the form of putting up with a single garrison deployed in Belgrade.⁴¹ As other big powers did not join Austria and Britain in their protest, the Serbian government had no need to yield to the pressure.

At the end of the month, Longworth informed that the Prince's emissary Milan Petronijević had returned from St. Petersburg. Although his informer was unsuccessful in learning the details of the mission, Longworth thought he had correctly assumed its objective. Prince Mihailo had endeavored so to free himself from the "Russian party", that he had, thought Longworth, nearly ruptured relations with the Russian government. Petronijević was charged with amending this. He then had to ascertain whether Serbia had Russia's support, should events in Bosnia-Herzegovina take a more favorable turn, in demanding from the Porte the administration of Bosnia. This would, of course, require Russia's backing in money and arms. Petronijević, Longworth had learned, had received promise for financial and political support, but was reprimanded for the Prince's casual attitude toward the belligerent Orthodox population in the neighboring provinces.⁴² In fact, although promising a loan and the sale of a large number of old guns, the Russian government had advised a moderate policy.

Several days before Belgrade was bombed from the Turkish fort, Longworth had noticed an unusual vivacity in the Russian consulate after Vlangaly's return from Vienna.⁴³ The bombardment had prevented him from learning more about it.

40 Longworth to Bulwer, March 17, 1862, Belgrade, FO 78/1672.

41 Foreign Office to Longworth, April 8, 1862, London, FO 78/1671.

42 Longworth to Bulwer, April 26, 1862, Belgrade, FO 78/1672.

43 Longworth to Bulwer, June 11, 1862, Belgrade, FO 78/1672.

Pursuing humanistic goals rather than performing a diplomatic task, or, perhaps, overcome by an injured vanity because the Austrian consul Vasić had gone to the Belgrade fort unsolicited, and, allegedly, affected an end to the bombing, Longworth cooperated more with Vlangaly and the French consul Tastu at the beginning of diplomatic activities to pacify the hostilities. As a doyen of the Belgrade consular corps, Longworth believed that Vasić's stay in the fort during the bombardment should be condemned. But he quickly changed his mind. He received a severe rebuff from Constantinople to the effect that Britain's policy "generally agrees better with that of Austria in Serbia than with that of any other Power" and to cooperate with Vasić. When they realized that "the Servians, backed by the French and Russian, are becoming quite unreasonable", Longworth's superiors believed it was because their consul "went too much with France and Russia against Austria". As he received clear instructions and realized his position as consul was shaky, Longworth apologized for the error but could not conceal his anger and resentment.⁴⁴ He continued to report fervently on the developments in Belgrade, but to the end of the Kanlyja conference, mentioned neither Vlangaly nor the Russian party. Only once he reported that a certain Major Djordjević had arrived from Russia and was immediately appointed chief commander of the Serbian army. Longworth saw in Djordjević a Russian Mondain in Serbia and underscored it might jeopardize a peaceful solution to the problem.⁴⁵

The conference of the ambassadors of the Great Powers on the Serbian question commenced on July 22, 1862, in the summer resort of Fuad Pasha in the Constantinople suburb of Kanlyja. Britain's ambassador Bulwer sometimes advocated Turkish interests more vehemently than the Turkish ambassador himself. He was backed by the Austrian internuncio Osten-Prokesch. Serbian interests were truculently represented by French Marquis de Moustier. Russian ambassador Lobanov-Rostovsky supported Moustier's proposals but not as Serbia expected from a Russian deputy. The Italian ambassador, Marquis Caracciolo,

44 Bulwer to Russell, June 21, 1862, Constantinople, Correspondence relating to the Bombardment of Belgrade in June 1862, (Further: Correspondence...) FO 421; Longworth to Bulwer, June 22, 1862, Belgrade, FO 78/1672; Bulwer to Russell, June 22, 1862, Constantinople; Bulwer to Russell, June 24, 1862, Constantinople; Bulwer to Russell, June 24, 1862, Istanbul, Correspondence...; Foreign Office to Longworth, July 7, 1862, London, FO 78/1671; Longworth to Bulwer, July 8, 1862; *Ibid* - Russel, July 28 and 31, August 1, 1862, Belgrade FO 78/1672.

45 Longworth to Bulwer, August 8, 1862, Belgrade, FO 78/1673.

had not enough strength to affect decisions to Serbia's advantage. But the hesitant stand of Prussian ambassador Baron Werthern made Moustier shrink to moderation in his demands. The conference closed on September 4, 1862, and the representatives of the Guaranteeing Powers signed a protocol on September 8. It was decided that the fortresses Soko and Užice were to be demolished. And a decision of thirty years before was confirmed whereby Muslims settled outside the fortress walls were to be evacuated. Guarantees against additional bombardments were given in an unusual manner, with a rejection of a proposal that Turkey pay for the damages of the last bombardment. Serbia's desires were only partially fulfilled.

The British consul in Belgrade, of course, knew nothing of the progress of the Conference in Kanlyja.

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The Crimean War put Great Britain and Russia on opposite sides. Britain was on the winning side. Russia, the defeated side, had much to give up. She had to give over to Britain priority in Constantinople. But in the Balkans, Russia had what Britain would never achieve: the sympathy of the Slavic Orthodox population and a widely ramified and successful network of agents. If Britain reigned over Constantinople in the diplomatic game, Russia spun a thick cobweb in the provinces. Even if they had no reason to complain about a shortage of money, the British consuls in Belgrade could not have avoided what had happened to Longworth in 1861: informative isolation. Judging by reports, Longworth was unable to establish strong ties with any prominent Serbian politician in order to obtain information, although Garašanin had once left him a bag of private confidential letters. The only reliable sources for British consuls were the Austrian consul and the Turkish pasha. Thus the reports by British consuls in Belgrade about Russo-Serbian relations from 1856-1862 are rather meager, at times even verging on conjecture. But they were able to establish the chief course of the relations, so Fonblanque was not mistaken when he claimed that "the policy of Russia is one of Perturbation en attendant mieux".⁴⁶ Bulwer stated the general policy of his country when he arrived in Belgrade after the Kanlyja Conference, in October 1862. He admitted that the Serbs had reason to be unhappy and promised the Serbian government

46 Fonblanque to Clarendon, March 10, 1857, Belgrade, FO 78/1278.

sincere support in everything that would not present a breach of the principle of Turkish integrity.

Translated by Dragana Vulićević

СРПСКО-РУСКИ ОДНОСИ ОД 1856. ДО 1862. ГОДИНЕ
- према извештајима британских конзула из Београда -

Резиме

Одредбама Париског мировног уговора закљученог 30. марта 1856. године је, између осталог, укинут руски протекторат над Кнежевином Србијом. Србија је, овим Уговором, стављена под колективни протекторат великих сила. Међутим, дугогодишњи утицај и подршка Русије Србији оставили су дубоке трагове у политичком мишљењу приличног броја српских државника и, можда још дубље, урезали осећање дуга и наде у свест српског грађанина и сељака. Британска политика очувања Турске Царевине је, пак, диктирала британским конзулима у Београду Фонбланку и Лонгворту резервисаност па и противљење тежњама српског народа и сарадњу са аустријским конзулом и београдским пашом. Таква политика никако није могла бити блиска ни српским политичарима ни српском обичном човеку па су њихове жеље, још увек, тражиле ослонац у Русији и, доста ређе, у Француској.

Због тога британски конзули у Београду не само да нису могли да остваре свој сталнији и стабилнији утицај у српским политичким круговима већ су, често, били на мукама приликом прикупљања основних поузданијих информација. Ни Фонбланк ни Лонгворт нису успели да организују мрежу сигурних и способних сарадника преко којих би сузбијали руски утицај у Србији. Није зато необично што су ова двојица дипломата, понекад, видели руске прсте и тамо где их није било. Ипак, њихови извештаји носе довољно поузданих података за стварање слике српске политичке сцене на којој се руски утицај, још увек, веома јасно види.

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