

honorary Founding Father of the triumphant Romanian nation. These chapters, essentially based on Michelet's correspondence and diary, assign the main roles to the Bratianu brothers and to C.A. Rosetti. About the lectures at the Collège de France that were a source of inspiration and encouragement for such young men, significant evidence was provided by Ambrus Miskolczy who has published the notes taken by one of them in a book which should have been used. Among the French friends who belonged to the circle, Armand Lévy and Charles-Louis Chassin would have deserved more attention, as activists of the internationalist and republican propaganda. On the 19<sup>th</sup> century Romanians seduced by Free-Masonry we expected to see references to the works of Dan Berindei and Mihai D. Sturdza. There is, however, some new information here, about a very interesting character, the British consul in Bucharest Robert Colquhoun. For the first time his connection with the revolutionaries is explained by his kinship, that always mattered to a Scottish laird: he was related to Mary Grant, Rosetti's wife.

Speaking of Rosetti's sentimental life, let us add that his diary is quite explicit on another of his loves – for Catinca Odobescu, whose husband, the general, having attempted a coup against the provisional government, was nevertheless pardoned by Rosetti.

In Part Two, once again, Michelet's correspondence is serving to evoke the roaming of the two Bratianus through Western Europe when they endeavoured to enlist politicians and public opinion in favour of the Romanian national cause. This time, the amount of material is considerable and most of it is furnished by the Golescu private papers. Being published on the eve of the World War in 1939, those four big volumes had almost never been used in the foreign historiography. This section of the work highlights the dialogue of the Romanian exiles with the other political emigrations. Another direction of research which might be followed is Michelet's file on the Danubian Principalities, included by Michel Cadot in his 1968 edition of *Légendes démocratiques du Nord*. Dumitru Bratianu's lobbying in London during the years 1849–1850 stands in importance well above the other episodes in the book we are reviewing: it occasioned the memorandum to Palmerston, which also went into print, and a pamphlet by W. Lloyd Birkbeck, a publicity campaign that allowed some hopes to the exiles. A good chapter concerns the secret associations in France and the plot against the life of Napoleon III in which Ion Bratianu was involved.

The final part deals with the life of the itinerant preachers of Romanian unification until their state-building action brought them to power. As a last supplement to bibliography, I recommend to read the documents I published in *Revista Arhivelor*, 2, 2009: they show how many of the exiles begged to be granted pardon and how Prince Barbu Stirbey allowed them to return to the country. It is true that the leaders were too proud to accept this humiliation and they waited till the end of the Crimean War and the change of regime.

The volume makes clear not only the vicissitudes experienced abroad by the „circle of friends” (after all, this book is only about the Rosetti and Bratianu families), but also the transfer from biography to myth which guaranteed their reputation with posterity. As a mean to inform foreign readers, it will be useful.

*Andrei Pippidi*

Miloš KOVIĆ, *Disraeli and the Eastern Question*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2011, 339 pages.

Let's have a glance at this much-needed book, recently translated from its original Serbian version. It is throwing light on a very complex personality, one of the greatest statesmen of his time, and on the kaleidoscopic policies he pursued to the Near East. As the author rightly remarks: 'Of all the British prime ministers up until the present day, Disraeli had the most direct and personal knowledge of the Ottoman Empire and the Balkans'. Dr Ković achieved an outstanding contribution to the history of international relations by studying Disraeli's role in drawing borders in South-Eastern Europe, but also by considering his efficiency in maintaining the balance among the Great Powers during the Eastern Crisis of the 1870s. The reader will also discover along Disraeli's biography the origin of some prejudices he would manifest in his diplomatic negotiations. Travels he

made in his youth or the literature he wrote are thus examined. The most impressive feature of this work is the constant use of a great number of unpublished sources (especially private papers and correspondence).

Perusing through earlier or later episodes is a fascinating journey. For instance, the first contacts of Disraeli with the Ottoman Empire happened in 1830, when he visited Epirus, Constantinople, Syria and Egypt. Several of his novels took their inspiration from that travel, one of them being a romanticized history of Skanderbeg. The young author even had the pluck to send his excursion's literary result to Mahmud II. After repeated attempts, Disraeli became an M.P. in 1837, when he was thirty-three. The strategy he chose, typical for enterprising and independent outsiders on the threshold of political life, was to bring together the conservatives with the radical democrats against the liberal oligarchy. The Serbian crisis of 1843 gave Disraeli the opportunity to mark his dissident position within the Tory party. Since then he showed himself as pro-Turkish and anti-Russian, a standing towards which he was encouraged by the Polish émigrés and by that opinionated adversary of Russia, David Urquhart.

During the following years Disraeli was committed to this policy and was already confronted by Gladstone, who will be his longstanding rival. Some of the attitudes he took then are strikingly premonitory. Since 1847 Disraeli imagined the displacement of the centre of the British Empire from London to Delhi; in 1851, as a Zionist *avant la lettre*, he conceived the possibility of a Jewish state in Palestina. In 1854 he noted that some of his colleagues in Parliament intended to encourage the Christian subjects of the sultan, by advancing their civilisation and increasing their rights, but he disapproved them because they might serve Russia's strategic interests. The same view prevented him from acting in favour of the Moldo-Wallachian Union. Later, another reason added itself to the lack of sympathy showed by Disraeli to the Romanians: the reports he received about the marginalized situation of the Jews in that country (here, a great deal of new information, from Sir Moses Montefiore, the well-known philanthropist, in 1867, and from Armand Levy in 1873).

Evidence about Disraeli accepting or expediting the undermining of the unity of the Ottoman Empire comes from the documents concerning the hectic years 1876–1877. He even aspired to occupy Constantinople, the key of the road to India, or at least Gallipoli. His immediate project included the seizure of Varna, if not of the whole of Bulgaria. He went as far as proposing to plant 6 000 Belgian soldiers in Bulgaria as a neutral force (exactly like an ONU intervention nowadays). In his negotiations with Ignatiev, Salisbury agreed to consider an autonomous Western Bulgaria that would have incorporated Macedonia and, further, Niš. Being warned by his agent in Bucharest, Colonel Mansfield-Derby, about the Romanian government's intention to allow Russian troops to cross towards the Danube, the British prime minister recriminated against this breach of neutrality. The pattern, already sketched at Reichstadt and at Budapest, that sacrificed Bessarabia (at least its Southern districts) to Russia, in exchange for the Austrian expansion to Bosnia-Herzegovina, was to be realized.

Meanwhile, because the future archaeologist Arthur Evans had denounced the slaughters in Bosnia, the dramatic fate of the Balkan Christians provoked reactions within the British Parliament. The Duke of Argyll and Lord Hartington pleaded 'the cause of the oppressed nationalities of Turkey'. Their conclusion was formulated in such strong terms: 'you ought to have no peace in Europe until the well-being of the Christian subjects of the Porte has been secured by the united action of the European Powers'. Instead, Lord Beaconsfield, as he was now, managed to gain the support of Queen Victoria for his ironical response to the moralist discourse.

During the war and in the middle of the negotiations which prepared the Berlin settlement, he continued to treat with contempt 'the Romanian rascals', guilty of having joined the Russian side, and even 'the infamous Roumanians' (in September, after they had been pushed back at Plevna). Not only the territorial loss of Southern Bessarabia met with Beaconsfield's approval – perhaps because it would enhance anti-Russian sentiments in Bucharest –, but even Romania's independence was not regarded as already acquired. A possible development could have been, according to his opinion, to grant to Austria-Hungary suzerainty over this principality! At about the same time, Abdul Hamid did not hesitate to demand the division of Romania into Wallachia and Moldavia like before 1859. In the public debate over the Berlin Treaty, Gladstone criticized the exchange between Southern Bessarabia and the Dobrudja, while Beaconsfield, in a letter to the queen before the closing of the Congress, wrote:

‘The Rumanians have made a very good bargain for themselves, which was at the bottom of all their impotunity. It is also an arrangement favourable to Turkey and Great Britain, for it gives them a seacoast which would have been Bulgarian (Russian) but which now belongs to an Anti-Slav race’. Despite the cynicism of this judgment, it was not far from the truth.

Abounding with references to documents which were still unpublished or unknown to historians from our part of the world, this book not only gives a sound account of Disraeli’s understanding (or misunderstanding) of South-Eastern Europe: it is stimulating to an immediate taking up again of the research.

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Milena TAFROVA, *Tanzimatut. Vilaetskata Reforma i Bulgarite. Administratsija na Dunavskija Vilaet (1864–1878)*, Sofija, IK Gutenberg, 2010, 237 pp.

The topics of the Ottoman legacy in South Eastern Europe incited polemics amongst historians first, then amongst other scholars as well in social sciences<sup>1</sup>. The inability of Balkan national states to adopt the Western political institutions after the demise of the Ottoman Empire found in this legacy one explanation/justification. Nevertheless, a different perspective showing more insight made conspicuous some effective and even positive consequences of the Ottoman period.

Tafrova’s enquiry has attempted to keep this balance in approaching one historical turn point in the life of the Ottoman Empire, the Tanzimat reforms, looking at how they took place in one of the main parts of that empire, the Danube vilayet<sup>2</sup>. The author bases her analysis mostly on first hand data, archives, statistics, and newspapers of that time. This close familiarity with the real facts helps her to achieve a fertile neutrality, the notion she points out to since the volume’s introduction. Tafrova banishes the idea that these reforms were short sighted and chaotic as some scholars misrepresented them. On the contrary, the radical change in administration and politics brought by the Western inspired Tanzimat finally provided chances for the non-Muslim population, Bulgarian chiefly, to ascend in the hierarchies of their native society. The latter subject is so important that Tafrova reassesses it separately in the book’s last chapter.

The volume is divided in three chapters. The first of them casts a glance at the reforms beginning with November 1839, the date of the Hatisherif that proclaimed the Tanzimat, to the end of 1864 when the Danube vilayet was founded. In the second chapter, which contains the chronological continuation of the events, Tafrova writes about the vilayet’s administration, its structure and institutions. As I said above, in the third chapter the presence of non-Muslims, mostly Bulgarians, in the various councils and bureaucratic bodies of the province is emphasized and their activity scrutinized. The volume ends with one short section of Conclusions (pp. 202–206) and with an Appendix with lists of names of the non-Muslim representatives in the administrative and judicial councils of the province during the years 1868–1876.

The book begins with a picturesque description of the scene in the Gulhane garden where the Hatisherif that announced the Tanzimat was proclaimed. Not by chance, the author has chosen this image. The symbolism of the Sultan power sharply contrasts with the presence of the representatives

<sup>1</sup> See for instance Roger Crampton, „Bulgarian Society in the early 19th century”, in Richard Clogg (ed), 1981, *Balkan Society in the Age of Greek Independence*, Barnes&Noble Books, Totowa, New Jersey, pp. 157–204; Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, Oxford University Press, New York, Oxford, 1997, chapter 7; Alina Mungiu Pippidi, Wim van Meurs (eds), *Ottomans into Europeans. State and Institution Building in South-East Europe*, Hurst&Company, London, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> This province became an administrative unit in 1864 by including all smaller units, sandjaks, on the right bank of the Danube, from West to East, Nish, Vidin, Tymoovo, Ruschuk, Varna, and Tulcha, as well as Sofija.