

DIPLOMACY AND CANDIDATES FOR BULGARIAN RULER 1877-1879

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Abstract

The present study presents the diplomatic negotiations and the main candidates for a future Bulgarian prince. The positions of the Great Powers regarding the form of state government and the place of the monarch in it are outlined. The main foreign and Bulgarian candidates for the throne are presented, as well as the election itself. The main purpose of the study is to trace and analyze the diplomatic conversations, the candidacies, and preferences of the Great Powers for the election of a Bulgarian prince. To achieve this goal, problem-thematic and problematic chronological methods are used. As a result of the study, it was concluded that the election of a Bulgarian prince was a decision of the Great Powers, with the Russian Empire playing a key role in this process. The Bulgarian people were kept away from these negotiations and subsequently a candidacy was imposed on them to accept.

Key words: Bulgaria, diplomacy, prince, government rulers.

Introduction

One of the crucial issues that were discussed in diplomatic circles on the eve of the Bulgarian Liberation were about the form of state structure and the personality of the ruler. The republican ideas professed by L. Karavelov and V. Levski have been forgotten. Foreign diplomats and representatives of the Bulgarian political emigration perceived the monarchical form of government as the most suitable for the Bulgarian people. The Bulgarians, led by the memory of their medieval state tradition, also want to see a tsar at the head of their state.

On the question of the origin of the future ruler, the diplomats of the Great Powers declared their position that he should be a foreigner, because among the Bulgarians they did not see a prepared person for this exalted position. In the preliminary Treaty of San Stefano and the subsequent Congress of Berlin, the Bulgarians were given the opportunity to elect their prince, who must be confirmed by the Sublime Porte, with the consent of the Great Powers. Nowhere is it written that the ruler must necessarily be a foreigner. But the condition that he should not be a representative of one of the functioning European dynasties suggests the desire that he should not be a Bulgarian, but a foreigner, and not from a high noble class.

The main goal of this study is to follow the diplomatic negotiations and the main candidates for Bulgarian monarch. To achieve it, historical sources from the

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Bulgarian periodicals, archival documents and memories of contemporaries have been studied. In the study, the problem-thematic and problem-chronological methods were used.

1. Foreign candidates for Bulgarian ruler

Until the election for Bulgarian prince was held, the names of several candidates were discussed in diplomatic circles and various organizations. Some of the most prominent are the Romanian prince Carol I, Valdemar of Denmark, the Serbian king Milan, the Montenegrin voivode Božo Petrovic, Prince Bibesko, the German ambassador in Vienna Prince Henry XXV.

After the signing of the Treaty of Berlin, the name of Prince Valdemar of Denmark was mentioned as a candidate, which was seen sympathetic to the future Minister of War P. Parensov. But too soon it was forgotten, because according to the treaty, the brother of the future Russian Empress and the son of the Danish king could not be Prince of Bulgaria (Parensov, 1909: 23-24).

Another name that was considered for the highest post in the newly liberated Bulgarian state, immediately after the end of the work of the Berlin Congress, was that of the Duke of San Donato, Pavel Demidov. His candidacy was supported by some circles in Russian society, because immediately before these events he held the post of mayor of Kiev (Zornitsa, July 27, 1878.) But this proposal is not serious, because subsequently, it was discussed neither in the press nor in the highest diplomatic circles.

A very current candidate is that of the Montenegrin voivode Božo Petrović, who was supported, especially by St. Petersburg circles, immediately after the signing of the Treaty of Berlin. The contender was a cousin of Prince Nikita, who was also considered a Bulgarian prince (Maritsa, October 6, 1878). The Slavophiles and a significant part of the senior military were agitating for Bozho Petrovich. Even the Minister of Defense D. A. Milyutin stood behind the candidacy, who saw in his person a guarantee for the future development of Bulgaria in the Slavic spirit (Radev, 1990:146; Milyutin, 1950:294). The Bulgarian press also pays serious attention to this candidacy. In the late autumn of 1878, it became relevant again and on this occasion the newspaper "Bulgarin" reported that according to a letter from Cetina, the candidacy of Božo Petrović again took a serious direction. *"This candidacy, which has been rejected so far, has again been brought to the stage by the Russian government. Already in Berlin it was proposed that Bozho Petrovich should become a Bulgarian prince, but he did not take him seriously, and the forces did not show attention."* (Bulgarin, November 30, 1878). The renewal of the candidacy of the Montenegrin voivode in November 1878 was dictated by complex diplomatic negotiations, in which some parameters were clearly outlined, such as the intransigence of the Sublime Porte in relation to a Russian candidate, implying Prince A. M. Dondukov-Korsakov and Count N. P. Ignatiev (Bulgarin, November 30, 1878). At the beginning

of 1879, Božo Petrović continued to be one of the most controversial candidates, along with Prince Al. Battenberg (Maritsa, 26 January 1879).

The other serious candidate for the Bulgarian throne was the Romanian prince Carol I. He advertised his claims to the Bulgarian throne during the negotiations between the Russian Empire and Romania for the upcoming Russo-Turkish war (1877-1878). In his memoirs, Count N. P. Ignatiev states that Prince Karol diplomatically made a hint about his desire for the Bulgarian throne and his dream to devote himself to the creation of Bulgaria and its social structure. In the meeting with Count J. Bratianu confirmed and even encouraged these claims. From the words of J. Bratianu it is not clear the purpose of the election of Prince Carol, which he desired. N. P. Ignatiev concluded that in this way the liberal ministers wanted to remove him from the country, fearing his personal influence. His other assumption is that they seek to establish a personal union between Bulgaria and Romania.

In reply to hints and inquiries about the future Bulgarian prince, a diplomat declared that the Russian emperor did not yet have a candidate for Bulgaria, that the choice of the prince would depend on the population itself, and that if Prince Carol wished to run for office, he should draw the attention of the Bulgarian population to himself (Ignatiev, 1986:362).

The wishes of Prince Carol I to become Bulgarian ruler were also stated at the meeting between Count N. P. Ignatiev and the Romanian royal couple on January 20, 1878 (Ignatiev, 1986:362). Then they unequivocally expressed their desire to be called by the Bulgarians to rule Sofia.

In pursuit of his ambitions, the Romanian prince sought international support from the Great Powers and the Sultan. Proof of this is the correspondence between the Russian Imperial Commissar Prince A. M. Dondukov-Korsakov and the Russian Ambassador in Constantinople Prince A. B. Lobanov-Rostovsky at the end of 1878. In a special telegram on December 14, the ambassador wrote that the Prince of Romania, through his envoy, expressed to the Sultan, the English, French, and Austrian ambassadors his desire to be elected Bulgarian prince. All of them gave their consent, except for the Austrian ambassador (Ignatiev, 1986). In his reply, Prince A. M. Dondukov-Korsakov firmly stated that the candidacy of Prince Carol I had no chance of success among the Bulgarian population.

Despite the indirect agitation on the Romanian side, the British diplomacy also lobbies for this candidacy, which wants to prevent Russian political influence in the Balkans through a Romanian-Bulgarian dualistic state. During the sessions of the Constituent Assembly in 1879, the English delegate Palgrave agitated some of the Bulgarian deputies to support the candidacy of the Romanian prince for the Bulgarian throne. In his memoirs, M. Balabanov describes in detail his meeting with the delegate, who exhorted him that the election of King Carol I would be good for Bulgaria and would be looked upon with a good eye by Western countries. On the very day of the election, the English delegate exhorted Dr. Tsankov to support the

candidacy of Prince Carol I. To these demands, the Bulgarian politician replied that in their choice they would trust Russia's proposals." (Radev,1990)

Along with the Romanian king, his brother Frederick Hohenzollern also appeared as a candidate for the Bulgarian throne. But his candidacy was declared inappropriate, one of the reasons being that he belonged to the ruling dynasties in Europe, and the other was that he was the brother of Prince Carol I.

In addition to the Romanian king, another of the Balkan rulers showed undisguised ambitions for the Bulgarian throne. This is the Serbian ruler King Milan, who dreams of becoming the head of a large South Slavic state. Russia supported this candidacy, and she always withdrew it when diplomatic negotiations for the Bulgarian prince became more complicated. Thus, in February 1879, in the final part of the debate, Russia again withdrew the candidacy of King Milan, and Russian diplomacy even sent Gen. M. Chernyaev and M. Lohoratch, the well-known Serbian engine, to Sofia and Tarnovo to influence the Bulgarian representatives in this direction (Zornitsa, Feb. 22, 1879). The "Golos" newspaper reacted to the candidacy of King Milan. In his article, he stated that the Serbian ruler was a tool of Austria and saw in him a threat to the Russian Empire and its policy in the Balkans. The goal of the Serbian king, according to the newspaper, was to annex Bulgaria to Serbia by temporarily renouncing the Serbian throne, appointing a provisional government, and after his election to the Bulgarian throne to be re-elected as a Serbian ruler (Maritsa Feb. 2, 1879). Despite all these shuttles and publications in the press, it was not possible to officially put forward the candidacy of King Milan, both on the Russian side and on the part of another of the Great Powers, and it can be assumed that it was used for smear during the diplomatic negotiations.

Knyaz A. M. Dondukov-Korsakov also declared his candidacy for the Bulgarian throne. It is popular among the Bulgarian population due to its activities in the structure of civil government. His positive is the fact that he is a representative of the Russian Emperor Alexander II, and the Bulgarians openly declare their desire for their ruler to be Russian. The ambitions of the prince were further fueled by the position of the Russian autocrat to give the Bulgarian population complete freedom in the election of a monarch. This decision of his was shared after the end of the Congress of Berlin, in the summer of 1878, and can be seen as an emotional move because of his decisions (Indzhov, 2016:131-135).

In a letter dated August 14, 1878, to the Minister of War D.A. Milyutin, Prince A.M. Dondukov-Korsakov stated that the choice of a Bulgarian prince should not be left to chance and political intrigues. He suggests not to rush the withdrawal of the Russian army. The latter proposal is dictated by the idea of staying longer in the post of Russian imperial commissar and better preparing his candidacy. By letter dated August 21, 1878, the Minister of War informed the prince that it had been reported to official St. Petersburg. Regarding the candidacy of the Serbian king, Milan expressed the opinion that it had no real chances, because the Great Powers would not allow the creation of a strong and influential principality in the Balkans.

For the same reason, he considered that the Romanian king Carol I also had no prospects of success. Regarding the extension of the Russian occupation, D.A. Milyutin emphasizes that the international obligations arising from the Berlin Treaty must be respected (Indzhov, 2016:131-135).

A strong move in the agitation of Prince A. M. Dondukov-Korsakov was that he stood behind the demands of the Bulgarians for a revision of the Treaty of Berlin and supported all actions conducted with the decisions on the national question. This increased his popularity, and he continued to report to St. Petersburg that it was not yet time for the election of a prince, due to unrest among the Bulgarians (Indzhov, 2016:131-135).

A large part of the Bulgarian population also stood behind the candidacy of Prince A. M. Dondukov-Korsakov. In his face he sees his future prince. Indicative in this regard is the article by M. D. Tihchev from Tulcea in the newspaper "Bulgarin". In it, the author states that the personality of Prince Dondukov fully meets the expectations of the public for a Bulgarian ruler. His devotion to the Bulgarians, his activity in the organization of government, administration and army are emphasized. Its role in the unification of the Bulgarians in one country and the sharp reaction to the decisions of the Berlin Congress are emphasized (Indzhov, 2016:131-135).

The candidacy of Prince A. M. Dondukov-Korsakov is the subject of comments from the European press. Everyone agrees that he has great popularity among the Bulgarian population and can easily win the elections for the throne. But in all the articles it is pointed out that the Great Powers will not approve this candidacy because it is of a Russian and defends the idea of a united Bulgaria (Indzhov, 2016:131-135).

The ambition of Prince A. M. Dondukov-Korsakov to become a Bulgarian ruler won him many opponents. Most of the Russian officers in Bulgaria criticized the prince for his actions in defense of Bulgarian national interests and were dictated by his intentions to increase his influence among the Bulgarians. His work became the subject of criticism, as proof of this are the reports of Prince Al. Tseretelev and Prince A. B. Lobanov-Rostovsky. The critics were joined by some of the European governments, which quite officially expressed disappointment with the behavior of Prince A. M. Dondukov-Korsakov (Indzhov, 2016:131-135).

The campaign against the prince yielded results. According to official sources from European capitals, Emperor Alexander II ordered Prince A. M. Dondukov-Korsakov to give up his ambitions. The result of this polemic is visible in the subsequent position of the prince, who express the opinion that the Bulgarian monarch should not be a Russian subject or a representative of the Russian Empire (Indzhov, 2016:131-135).

Despite this retreat, Prince A. M. Dondukov-Korsakov did not lose hope for the Bulgarian throne. Proof of this is the time during which Alexander Battenberg's candidacy was imposed. To discredit the prince, he pointed out to D. A. Milyutin the fact that he did not belong to Eastern Orthodoxy and such a monarch could strengthen Austrian influence in Bulgaria (Indzhov, 2016:131-135).

The hopes of Prince A. M. Dondukov-Korsakov to become a Bulgarian prince finally collapsed a few weeks before the election, after the explicit instruction of official St. Petersburg not to include any Russian subject in the election. But despite this, he makes attempts to postpone the choice in time. His last desperate attempt to get out of the situation with honor was related to his idea to invite the Bulgarian deputies to elect him as a prince, and he to give up voluntarily, arguing that the Great Powers would not accept this choice. But the subsequent Russian diplomatic intervention in the person of diplomatic agent Davydov prevented this senseless scenario (Indzhov, 2016:131-135).

The other popular name among Russians, conjugated for a future Bulgarian prince, is that of Count N. P. Ignatiev. It also appears in the newspaper controversy that touches on this issue, but openly neither the count himself nor anyone else officially nominates his candidacy. The Bulgarian people are ready to accept it unconditionally, and one of its most ardent supporters is St. Stambolov. On the eve of the royal election, at a meeting of Marno Pole, held on April 15, 1879, he proposed to the Bulgarian deputies to elect N. P. Ignatiev as prince. His arguments are as follows: *"Count Ignatiev, says St. Stambolov, is a wise and skilled diplomat, an experienced administrator and a statesman and he will be our mentor, our adviser, because we are all still young, inexperienced in politics and he will guide us in everything... With it, gentlemen, we will be able to acquire San Stefano Bulgaria more easily and earlier..."* (Marinov, 1992:83)

A large part of the Bulgarian deputies decided to support Count N. P. Ignatiev as a Bulgarian prince. But their passions were quickly cooled by a telegram from St. Petersburg, which recalled the imperial decision for a Bulgarian prince not to elect a representative of the Russian Empire (Marinov, 1992:84).

Shortly before the election of a Bulgarian prince, Prince Georgi Bibesco – a Romanian boyar, expert in military affairs, joined the race. He sent to the Bulgarian founders the brochure "Features from the life of Prince George Bibesco", which recommended him for the high post (Zornitsa, April 19, 1879). According to a report of the "Maritza" newspaper, the brochure is entitled "Candidate for the Bulgarian throne" and is signed by P. Gabrovets. (Maritsa, February 13, 1879) But even before this candidacy was officially announced, the name of Prince Bibesco had been conceived for the Bulgarian throne since the summer of 1878. *"Prince Bibesco's candidacy is pure fiction. It has never been offered, and if it is offered... It will not work. The Bulgarians want a Bulgarian prince and are struggling to succeed. Russia is against of their desires," writes the newspaper "Bulgarin"* (Bulgarin, Aug. 20, 1878) But despite these correspondences, Prince G. Bibesco took his candidacy for Bulgarian prince too seriously. For agitation and popularization, immediately before the election as a Bulgarian prince, he spent considerable funds, which we read about in the memoirs of D. Marinov. The author says that to impose the candidacy of Prince G. Bibesco, a special envoy arrives in Tarnovo, who visits all prominent MPs. According to rumors, in the old Bulgarian capital, he carries with him more than 15-20 thousand Napoleons for bribing the representatives. D. Marin writes that his stay in Tarnovo

lasted more than a week. The turning point that put an end to the agitation of the envoy of Prince G. Bibesko was with P. Karavelova. The latter stated to him bluntly that this candidacy not only had no chance of success, but the deputies would not even entrust him with the royal stable (Marinov, 1992:82).

A serious candidate for the Bulgarian throne was the personality of Prince Reus. He was well acquainted with diplomacy and politics in the Balkans as a former German ambassador in Constantinople, and he was given an advantage by the fact that he was related to the Prussian and Russian imperial families (The Daily Telegraph, December 21, 1878). During the unofficial discussion of the candidates by the Bulgarian founders, the older Bulgarians preferred Prince Royce, because as an older man they found him more experienced in diplomacy and more capable of governing the Bulgarian principality (Zornitsa, January 25, 1879). Nevertheless, until the beginning of February 1879, nothing positive was known about the candidacy of Prince Reuss among the highest political circles, and during the election itself, his advanced age was pointed out as a disadvantage of his candidacy.

Prince Alexander Battenberg's candidacy appeared just before the Congress of Berlin (Zornitsa, June 29, 1879). As the nephew of the Russian Empress Maria Alexandrovna, he is associated with the Russian imperial court and the ruling dynasty, from where the last, decisive word in the election of the Bulgarian monarch is expected. He was the son of the German prince Alexander von Hesse and had family ties to the English royal family and the Polish aristocracy. It is said that Alexander was prepared for this post by Russian diplomacy already during the Russo-Turkish war.

Since the fall of 1878, Alexander Battenberg's candidacy has been gaining popularity. In all press reports, his name is invariably present. One of the advocates is the Russian emperor. On September 9, 1878, a meeting was held in Livadia, which was attended by Prince A.M. Dondukov-Korsakov and D.A. Milyutin. One of the questions is about the candidate for the Bulgarian throne, which has not yet been decided. Emperor Alexander II supported the candidacy of Al. Battenberg, and Prince A.M. Dondukov-Korsakov considered that this election would not be warmly received by the Bulgarians, at whom it should be announced that a Russian subject would not be allowed to participate in the election (Milyutin, 1950:103).

Towards the end of the year, according to journalists, the main candidates are the Prince of Battenberg and Prince Reuss, because both have family relations with both the Russian Empire and Prussia. When the Bulgarians challenge these candidates, the personality of Alexander Battenberg is supported by the younger ones, who want a young and energetic man as prince (Zornitsa, January 25, 1879). During the debates in the Constituent Assembly, nothing has yet been clarified on the issue of the future Bulgarian prince. Even at the beginning of February 1879, information appeared that *"Prince Battenberg, who had recently been in Potsdam, announced that he would not accept the throne of Bulgaria."* (Zornitsa, February 1, 1879) But later the young prince changed his mind and became the official candidate of the Russian emperor. At

the end of March, the newspaper "Maritsa", referring to information from the "Morning Post", reported that Al. Battenberg accepted the candidacy for the Bulgarian throne, and that his election was recovered (Maritsa, March 20, 1879).

2. Bulgarian Candidacies for Prince

Among the many candidates for the Bulgarian throne, there are also Bulgarians. The elevation of a Bulgarian candidate for prince, regardless of the agreements reached in Berlin, was also a topic of diplomatic negotiations. During the frequent contacts between the British, Russian and Turkish governments, England repeatedly spoke in favor of the idea of raising *"some excellent Bulgarian to princely dignity"* (Zornitsa, November 16, 1878) and openly opposed the candidacies of the Serbian prince, Count N. P. Ignatiev and Prince A. M. Dondukov-Korsakov.

Immediately after the end of the Berlin Congress, the name of Stefan Bogoridi's son, Aleko Bogoridi, a man with some managerial experience and diplomatic practice from Vienna and Paris, was launched for Bulgarian prince. His candidacy found a worthy reflection in the press of the time. The newspaper "Zornitsa", reprinting the Western comments as early as June 29, mentions *"that at the suggestion of Russia, Aleko Pasha Bogoridi, son of the late Kotel resident Stefanaki Beya, would be elected Prince of Bulgaria."* (Zornitsa, June 29, 1878). In subsequent messages, Aleko Bogoridi and Prince Al. Battenberg are the most frequently mentioned candidates. In the direction of Aleko Bogoridi's desires and ambitions to become a Bulgarian prince, the negotiations between him and Prince A. B. Lobanov-Rostovsky in March 1879 for the post of governor of Eastern Rumelia testify. In Paris, the Russian diplomat goes to assess Aleko Bogoridi whether he has the qualities to be named as the Russian candidate. But his wife, listening attentively to the praises of the Russian prince, who pointed out that the Emperor of Russia highly valued his extraordinary qualities and had opted for him, said: "If His Majesty has such a good opinion of my husband's abilities, why does he not recommend him for Prince of Bulgaria?" Knyaz Lobanov gives an interesting explanation, pointing out that the post of Governor-General is more important, since Macedonia will be annexed at the first opportunity to the region of Eastern Rumelia, which will thus become the nucleus of the future whole of Bulgaria. In addition to Aleko Bogoridi, another representative of this influential family does not hide his ambitions for the royal throne. This is Emanuel Bogoridi – son of Nikola Bogoridi and Princess Konaki. His candidacy was not widely reflected and supported, but in 1887, after the abdication of Alexander I, he was again a candidate for the vacant throne (Radev, 1990: 459).

In the race for the Bulgarian throne, due to his noble origin, one of the heirs of the prominent Chiprovtsi citizen Georgi Peyachevich joined. This was Count Gabriel Pejačević, the seventh son of Ferdinand and grandson of Charles III, Count Pejačević, who laid the foundation for the Virovitica Lodge in Croatia (Marinov, 1992:82). But his candidacy did not receive popularity and necessary attention, both from the Great Powers and from the Bulgarians.

Among the other Bulgarian candidates for the throne, the one of Alexander the Exarch (1812-1891) is especially commented on. To realize his ambitions, he sought support among the deputies of the Constituent Assembly. In two proclamations he wrote from Paris, he proposed himself as a Bulgarian prince. In a letter to M. Balabanov, he stated that the ruler should be a Bulgarian and there were persons with the necessary qualities among the people. In his argumentation, he points out that a foreigner will not know the Bulgarian language, traditions, and customs, but will only live in luxury and will spend the people's money (Petkov, December 07, 2007). The proposal did not meet with support, because M. Balabanov was confident that there was no worthy candidate for prince among the Bulgarians.

Alexander Exarch also sent a letter to his compatriots from Paris, in which he recommended him as a Bulgarian prince. In it, he listed all his merits to the Bulgarian people from 1841 and expressed thoughts about what he could do if elected (Zornitsa, April 19, 1879).

In his attempts to win the trust of the deputies, Alexander Exarch sought the assistance of P. R. Slaveykov. Convinced that the Bulgarians did not have a worthy candidate for Prince, P. R. Slaveykov published an open letter to the Bulgarian contender in issue 1 of the *Osten* newspaper of March 5, 1879, in which he noted that this choice was not appropriate and would not make the foolish act of recommending him or advising the deputies to elect him as a prince (*Osten*, March 5, 1879). P. R. Slaveykov admits that Al. Exarch is not devoid of some abilities, but advises him not to lie and expose himself, because he is not suitable for a prince. But the subsequent insistence of the prominent Bulgarian forced P. R. Slaveykov with irony and sarcasm to advise him to make a warm winter room, to go home in it and look after his old age (*Osten*, March 5, 1879). The correspondence between the two ends with the Paris letter of Al. Exarch dated April 5/17, 1879, in which the candidate-ruler offered to donate to the newspaper published by P. R. Slaveykov against his election as prince.

The outcome of the dispute in absentia between the two was an article in the newspaper "*Osten*" from April 20, 1879, in which he reiterated his position that the election of a Bulgarian as prince would contradict the people's character, and the candidacy of Al. Exarch is inappropriate (Petkov, 2003:137; *Osten*, April 20, 1879).

Despite the opinions expressed that not only Alexander the Exarch, but the Bulgarian people cannot nominate a person worthy of a prince, there are also opinions against foreign candidates. Even G. Benkovski declared himself against the monarchy and foreign representatives for the Bulgarian throne. He does not dispute the assertion that the Bulgarians do not have a well-expressed aristocracy and ruling class; that there is no person with authority to put him alone at the head of government. But he declares that a foreign prince will come to Bulgaria with his foreign ideas, with his palace mores, and will want to make us what his class is – gorgeous, depraved and inflated (Madzharov, 1968:310).

3. Rules and choice for a Bulgarian prince

In accordance with the provisions of the international agreements, the election of the first Bulgarian prince was entrusted to an assembly of prominent Bulgarians, which should include all clergymen ruling the dioceses, Bulgarian vice-governors, presidents of all ranks of courts and six elected persons from each district. Regarding the candidacy of the prince, nothing has been determined. The principle of succession, financial maintenance and the basic powers of the ruler are defined (Archives speak, 2008: 159-160).

A few weeks before the election of a prince, other opinions were heard regarding its conduct. In a letter from Prague, published in the newspaper "Der Osten" of February 20, 1879, it was recommended that the Bulgarians form a committee of deputies to enter negotiations with the candidates, to present their demands to them and to assess them. In this way, Bulgarians will be able to actively participate in the choice, and not someone else to decide for them (Maritsa, March 2, 1879). This proposal is good as a wish, but practically impracticable, considering that the Great Powers, and especially official St. Petersburg, will not allow such activity on the Bulgarian side, because they decide the choice of a Bulgarian prince according to the clauses they have agreed upon in Berlin.

The Bulgarian people showed great interest in the question of the election of a prince. Publications appeared in the press with specific requirements for him. The most active were the newspapers "Zornitsa" (Dec. 7, 1878), "Bulgarin" (November 26, 1878) and "Maritsa" (January 19, 1879). The generalized idea is that the monarch should be free, have a high education, know well the basics of political economy, respect the laws, and be familiar with the character and aspirations of the Bulgarian people. They even reprinted the classification of the Golos newspaper, in which the candidates are divided into three categories. In the first category are placed the names of A.M. Dondukov, N.P. Ignatiev, A. Bogoridi and Y. Bratiano. It is specified that the Great Powers, especially England, France and Austria, will protest the first two, and the Russian Empire will protest the other two. In the second category are the names of the Bavarian prince Arnulf, Carol and his brother. The conclusion is that they cannot be elected because they are from royal houses. Therefore, the choice will be between the persons of the third category – Para. Battenberg, Prince Reuss and B. Petrovich (Maritsa, January 19, 1879).

Bulgarians learn about the candidates for ruler only from the press. Society was kept away from the great diplomacy of determining the future prince. In this diplomacy, the opinion of any of the representatives of the people regarding the person who should occupy the throne is not sought. In this way, the election of the first Bulgarian prince becomes a diplomatic game of the Great Powers, without the participation of those who will be ruled by him.

The election of a Bulgarian prince took place in the conditions of strong agitation against the election of a prince of divided Bulgaria. The people were ready to adopt the constitution, to order the administration, but to elect a vicerealty in place

of a prince (Maritsa, March 23, 1879). This radical measure was not reached and on April 17, 1879, the election of a Bulgarian prince was started. Golovin provided us with information about the holding of the only session of the First Grand National Assembly. He was given the floor of the Metropolitan of Ruse Gregory, who stated that there were several candidates for Bulgarian prince, but most of them were not suitable. The only mention is made of the candidacy of Prince Rice, who is presented as an honest and serious person. After this inauguration, Metropolitan Gregory proposed Prince Alexander of Battenberg as Bulgarian monarch, who was recommended by the Russian emperor. The election was approved unanimously by all MPs (Radev, 1990: 152).

The analysis of the first and only sitting of the First Grand National Assembly shows that the main candidates have not been presented to the MPs and there are no debates on them. There is also no voting for the candidates. The person recommended by the Russian Emperor for Bulgarian Prince was approved unanimously and the election of the monarch was not conducted by the Bulgarians themselves, but by the Russian Emperor and confirmed by our people's deputies.

The readiness of the Bulgarian elite to unconditionally submit to the will of St. Petersburg regarding the candidate for prince was noted by the contemporaries of the events Dr. Tsankov (Radev, 1990: 146) and A. Tsanov (Tsanov, 1991: 11). Both were adamant that the election was on the order of the Russian emperor, and the attitudes of the people and deputies were in line with the policy of official St. Petersburg, because he was proposed by Emperor Alexander II and is his relative and namesake.

The following words of D. speak best of the reaction of the election among the Russian political elite. A. Milyutin: *"On our instructions, Prince Alexander of Battenberg, nephew of the Empress, was unanimously elected."* (Milyutin, 1950: 138)

Conclusions

In the restoration of Bulgarian power, in the spirit of the time, the architects of the new statehood imposed the monarchical form of government. In connection with this, the question of the personality of the Bulgarian prince arises. The Great Powers determined that he should not be a representative of any of the existing European dynasties, thus placing him on a low rung in the hierarchy of the European monarchical family. As a result of diplomatic negotiations, the candidacy of Prince Alexander of Battenberg was favored, which was proposed by the Russian Emperor for approval by the First Grand National Assembly. Thus, the Bulgarians are deprived of the opportunity to establish their own dynasty and faithful to their national psychology, they are satisfied that none of them manages to surpass the others. The establishment of the monarchical form of government and the election of a foreigner to the Bulgarian throne was not a precedent in European practice at that time. Other neighboring Balkan countries, such as Greece and Romania, are examples in this regard.

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