

The Times and the Bulgarian Massacres

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Class of 2009

A thesis submitted to the
faculty of Wesleyan University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Bachelor of Arts
with Departmental Honors in History

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Acknowledgements

First, I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to my thesis advisor, Professor Bruce Masters, whose guidance, patience, and motivation made this project possible. I would also like to extend thanks to the entire History department at Wesleyan University, particularly, my academic advisor, Professor Nathanael Greene, for his support throughout my academic career. I also feel it is necessary to thank Alex Footman and the librarians within the Interlibrary Loan department of Olin University for helping me to obtain crucial texts and putting up with my habitual lateness in returning these texts. This project would not have been possible without their assistance.

I would like to give a very special thanks to my family and friends who have offered their continuous support throughout this process. In particular, Mollie Laffin-Rose, who provided invaluable editorial comments; my housemate, Lightning Jay, who has been my source of encouragement and inspiration for four years; and Amy Lum, who has helped me maintain a positive perspective on this project and life. Lastly, I feel it is necessary to mention my parents, Nancy and William Larkin, my brothers, Harrison and Patrick, and my grandmother, Angelina McDermott. Their unconditional love and support has been responsible for everything I have done as a scholar and as a person.

Introduction

In 1938, following the appeasement of the Munich Conference and the impending fate of the Czechs, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain famously declared, it was “a quarrel in a faraway country between people of whom we know nothing.” In theory, this should be even more appropriate regarding Bulgaria in 1876. In the summer of 1876 “foreign offices were absorbed in the squabbles of obscure Bulgarian villages.”¹ The average Englishman may have known nothing of Bulgarians, yet that did not stop them from becoming incensed over the massacres perpetrated by Turkish Muslims against Bulgarian Christians.² The press was largely responsible for drawing attention to Bulgaria. However, few scholars have examined the role *The Times*, the most influential British newspaper, played in the agitation movement, driving public opinion and encouraging criticism against the government.

The slow deterioration of the Ottoman Empire was well known to all European states, however Britain was unwilling to promote the Sultanate’s collapse if it meant strengthening Russia’s position in the Near East. There was a belief, particularly among Conservative statesmen, that the Ottoman Empire could be saved if it was helped to modernize and guided to reform. However, this notion first had to overcome a century of history of failed reforms before being accepted by the European public at large. One Italian adage went, “Il Tuco e sempre Turco” (The

¹ Charles Eliot, *Turkey in Europe*. New ed. (London: E. Arnold, 1908), 419.

² I acknowledge that the phrases “Bulgarian Massacres” and “Bulgarian Atrocities” are loaded terms, biased against Muslims and Turks of the Ottoman Empire without conceding the violence conducted by Christians. I use these words for their ubiquity in Britain, particularly in the media. It is not my intention to represent a prejudice against Muslims, Turks, or the Ottoman state, as I have attempted to create a more objective narrative of the events in Bulgaria in the summer of 1876.

Turk is always a Turk)³ while a French author wrote, “The world moves but the Near East stands still.”⁴

The first chapter will examine British-Ottoman relations during the 19th-century, leading up to May 1876, focusing particularly on British reactions to major events such as the Greek War of Independence and the Crimean War. These events, in relation to Britain’s position of power relative to Russia in the Near East, led to the political situation in the summer of 1876 and deserve consideration. It is also necessary to consider the many pervasive anti-Turkish, anti-Muslim, and anti-Ottoman sentiments that were popular in England throughout the 19th-century. These derogatory portrayals in the media, politics, and scholarship helped contribute to popular views concerning humanitarianism, Christianity, and the subjugation of an oppressed European people by a habitually misruling Ottoman state.

The Times was capable of driving public opinion, such as in the case of the Bulgarian agitation. As William Hargreaves noted, “Formerly the debates in the House of Commons guided, strengthened and ruled public opinion. They do so no longer, because the speakers are anticipated and the questions of the day better and more completely treated in the articles contained in the periodical literature of the day.”⁵ The second chapter will focus on the history of *The Times*, one of the most

³ *Personal Recollections of Turkish Misrule and Corruption in Syria with an Introduction by the Rev. Wm. Denton, M.A.*, (London: Cassel Petter & Galpin, 1877), 3.

⁴ Norman Dwight Harris, “The Effect of the Balkan Wars on European Alliances and the Future of the Ottoman Empire,” in *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 8, no. 1 (February 1914), 111.

⁵ William Hargreaves, *Revelations from Printing-House Square: is the anonymous system a security for the purity and independence of the press? : a question for ‘The Times’ newspaper*, (London: Knowsley Pamphlet Collection, 1864), 12.

influential and well-read newspapers not only in Britain, but throughout the world, during the 19th-century. The chapter will look specifically at technological innovation and journalistic techniques used by *The Times* that contributed to its legitimacy, authoritativeness, and influence. The power of the press in its ability to create, or at least influence, public opinion, will be discussed. The legacy of legitimacy and influence created earlier in the 19th-century allowed for *The Times*' supreme role during the Bulgarian agitation.

The third chapter will attempt to tell a more objective narrative of the events of May in Bulgaria. Although this account is limited to English sources, relying heavily on the reports of *The Daily News* correspondent Januarius MacGahan and official government documents from the British Foreign Office, there has been an attempt to incorporate pro-Bulgarian, pro-Ottoman, and anti-Ottoman secondary scholarship. The final chapter will look at the British reactions to the massacres, specifically the role *The Times* played in perpetuating the agitation movement which demanded revision to Britain's Near East foreign policy.

The proven inability of Turkish reform and pervasive anti-Turkish sentiments must be examined in conjunction with the print media's attack on the Ottoman and British governments in the aftermath of the Bulgarian massacres. During the Bulgarian agitation, the British government was suspiciously silent. The government's initial failure to release information concerning the massacres was not overlooked by the public. When the government did release its reports, it was long after the fact, and much later than newspapers' coverage of the atrocities. Lord Herbert of Lea once said, "There is something in the English character that dislikes

secrecy.”⁶ *The Times* rose up during the agitation as a voice of authority, based on its previously established credibility. The speed at which it disseminated information further elucidated the culpability of the government. As Disraeli wrote, “As far as *The Times* is concerned, it is a question of who shall rule the country: the Queen’s Minister or Printing house square.”⁷

The 21st-century, dubbed the “Information Age,” an age where the internet provides immediate information and print journalism is financially failing, has experienced the overwhelming desire for people to process more news at faster rates. However, this is hardly a new phenomenon. The rise in popularity of daily newspapers, the increased efficiency of printing, the creation of foreign news bureaus, and development of technology such as the telegraph all occurred in the 19th-century, putting European society on the path to demanding instantaneous access to new knowledge.

As demonstrated with the internet today, there is often a crisis of legitimacy and authority. Likewise in the 19th-century, there was the question as to whether one could believe everything read in one of the 492 new newspapers established in Britain between 1861 and 1885.⁸ However, the elite press, led by *The Times*, “refused to disseminate the outpourings of a nobody.”⁹ In 1876, the most influential and immediate media was daily, print journalism and *The Times* had established itself as the most legitimate, independent, and influential component of the mass media. The

⁶ Quoted in Hargreaves, 11.

⁷ Quoted in Gary Bass, *Freedom’s Battle: The Origins of Humanitarian Intervention*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008), 369.

⁸ Aled Jones, *Powers of the Press: Newspapers, Power and the Public in Nineteenth-Century England*, (Aldershot, England: Scolar Press, 1996), 23.

⁹ Jones, 89.

Bulgarian massacres and the subsequent agitation movement in Britain perfectly demonstrate the convergence of the press' influence, brought on by unprecedented levels of readership and improved technologies allowing for greater immediacy in reports, and the criticizing of a reticent government committed to a political policy to which the general public was largely opposed.

Chapter 1: Anglo-Ottoman Relations, 1798-1876

Political Interactions Between the British and Ottoman States

Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in July 1798 marked the beginning of an era of increasing European involvement in the Middle East. It clearly demonstrated what European powers had long believed; the Ottoman Empire was no longer capable of defending itself. Ottoman decline had been well documented prior to the French expedition; its prestige and power had been challenged earlier in the 18th-century. In 1774, Russia had gained the rights to navigate freely in the Black Sea, the Bosphorus, and through the Dardanelles Straits. The Ottoman army had long been declining in effectiveness, and while the Russian War of 1768-74 certainly demonstrated this, it was the blow by Napoleon that truly signaled the failure of the Ottoman polity, along with its military, to sustain its independence. This set a precedent for European powers to abuse and pick apart Europe's "sick man." But an answer to the "Eastern Question," the appropriate steps to deal with a declining and stagnant Ottoman Empire, eluded politicians and diplomats throughout the 19th-century.

On July 1, 1798, Napoleon's French forces landed in Egypt with little resistance. Control of Egypt was perceived to be key to any attempt to ruin British trade and thereby weaken its financial and political power. French troops routed the Mamluk army at the Battle of the Pyramids, gaining control over Egypt in less than three weeks. As a result, the Ottomans openly declared war against France, their most dependable ally of the last half-century, and quickly entered into formal alliances with Britain and Russia. One year later, on August 22, 1799, Napoleon fled Egypt, defeated by a combined Turkish-British-Russian fleet, leaving his army in

Egypt until 1801.¹ The results of this turn of events, however, left the Ottomans with no firmer control over Egypt than they had prior to the invasion, and the alliances they had been forced to establish were tentative at best.

“It is of no use to try to maintain the Turkish Empire,” Napoleon wrote back to France, “we shall witness its fall in our time.”² Yet, the Ottomans managed to outlast Napoleon by over a century. For the next 75 years, Britain and the Ottoman Empire would have an uneasy relationship, based on political intrigue, lofty rhetoric, and empty promises. Despite the often dishonest nature of this relationship, the Ottomans persisted in their struggle to survive, much to the chagrin of many Europeans and the elation of the British government.

The relationship between Britain and the Ottoman Empire was far from consistent throughout this period. Over the century, various British governments provided different levels of support to the Sultanate. What did drastically change, however, were the grounds on which the relationship was defended. In the earlier part of the 19th-century, *realpolitik* was an acceptable defense in support of the relationship. British interests and the defense of those interests were of the utmost importance in developing and executing foreign policy decisions. Whether it was defending passage to India and trade routes, or stopping the territorial or political expansion of another European Great Power at the expense of the Ottomans, these interests needed to be defended at all cost. Any gain by another power was perceived as a loss for Britain.

¹ MS Anderson, *The Eastern Question 1774-1923: A Study in International Relations*, (London: MacMillan and co., 1966), 26-29.

² Quoted in Evelyn Baring Cromer, *Political & Literary Essays, 1908-1913*. (London: MacMillan and co., 1913), 264.

As the century progressed, *realpolitik* was not sufficient to satisfy the British public, which was increasingly aware of conditions in the Ottoman Empire and appalled by them. New rhetoric needed to be voiced in order to appeal to the public. The defense of Christians within the Empire seemed to be a justifiable cause that was often employed to back British interventions, however, this proved to be problematic since the Russians claimed to be the rightful defenders of Orthodox Christians while the French took up the cause of the Maronite Catholic minority in Syria and Lebanon. Consequently, this left little room for Britain. Therefore, Britain championed the cause of Ottoman reform, which included overhauling the bureaucracy, modernizing the military, drafting a constitution, and increasing the rights of men. Although British commitment to these causes can certainly be questioned, since not much was said or done in the way of curbing the absolute power of the Sultan, there is evidence that British foreign office bureaucrats would at least suggest this was their goal.³

While most of Europe was forced to deal with war between France, led by Napoleon from 1799-1815, and the other Great Powers, the Ottomans dealt with many significant internal struggles. Local rulers such as Ali Pasha, in western Greece and Albania, and Muhammad Ali, an Albanian who had become the *de facto* ruler of Egypt, were challenging the Sultan's authority. Likewise, the janissaries, the elite corps of soldiers who were responsible for the Ottomans' successes centuries earlier and their stagnation in the 18th-century, worked to block the attempts of both Sultan Selim III (1789-1807) and his successor, Sultan Mahmud II (1808-1839), to

³ Harold Temperley, "British Policy towards Parliamentary Rule and Constitutionalism in Turkey (1830-1914)," in *Cambridge Historical Journal*, vol. 4, no. 2. (1933), 163.

modernize the army and the bureaucracy.⁴ While the bureaucracy was once a strength of the Ottomans in the early modern era, it had become inefficient. It relied on methods of outdated tax farming and was overly focused on imperial building projects. Their ineffectiveness was obvious in comparison to their European counterparts.

While political sparring and wars involving Britain, France, and Russia occurred from 1805 to 1815, considerable changes took place within the Ottoman Empire. In February 1804, a revolt broke out in Serbia. Since 1801, the janissaries had been ruling the province through terror, including extreme oppression of the Christian population. The janissaries, with their influence and power, were generally perceived within the Empire's administration as the greatest obstacle to reform and modernization. The rebellion raged on, with the 1807 massacre of Turks in Belgrade. Soon thereafter, the Serbs were able to garner support from Russia. However, even with some international support, Serbia's future remained unclear. It was proposed by France that Serbia be given to an Austrian archduke. The revolt continued with varying levels of success until 1817, when a weak Serbian state finally emerged, although annual tribute was still paid to the Istanbul and Ottoman garrisons remained in a few major towns.⁵

Although British distrust for Russia continued to grow, the 1805 Anglo-Russian alliance survived due to the continued and increasing threat of France. Russia had begun to take a greater interest in the Balkans, the home of its fellow Slavs, going so far as to create the 1807 Treaty of Tilsit, which theoretically

⁴ Anderson, 37.

⁵ Anderson, 48-52.

partitioned Ottoman Europe between Napoleon and Tsar Alexander I.⁶ Mutual distrust prevented the two nations from ever coming to terms and actually executing a meaningful incursion, with the exception of a Russian invasion of Moldavia and Wallachia (modern-day Romania). While this represented considerable territorial gain for Russia, it was far from the envisioned partition of the entire Ottoman Europe.

The 19th-century witnessed the Ottomans' failure to create a political identity that bound its subjects together. Ottomanism, the term for such an identity, floundered throughout this era, competing with religious and ethnic identities as the primary ideological basis of unity within the empire. While the 1876 proclamation of a constitution by Midhat Pasha served as the closest expression of a successful Ottoman nationalist movement, by that time ethnic identities had already strongly taken root. With that in mind, the Serbian revolt must be recognized as a tremendously important event. Serbs, who had not had an independent kingdom or state for centuries, returned to their history to recall and re-imagine an ethnic-national identity. Similarly, other Balkan groups recreated an ethnic identity based on the Serbs' example and began to express desires for ethnic autonomy during the first half of the 19th-century.

As a result, these nationalist movements created constant instability within Ottoman Europe. Even groups that did not have a prior historic identity tied to an independent polity, such as the Albanians, began to imagine a common history and demonstrate desire for autonomy. Albanians, with a Muslim majority, however, were more likely to lend support to the Ottoman government than Christian ethnic groups.

⁶ Anderson, 42.

This awakening of Balkan nationalism provided the greatest threat to the Ottoman Empire and led to European support for what was perceived as oppressed, Christian minorities.⁷

Unlike the case of Serbia, Western Europeans had a direct impact on the Greek War of Independence. Greeks living abroad had become a mainstay of economic life in many European cities. Furthermore, during the early 19th-century, there had been a revival of interest in Ancient Greece in Western Europe. Modern Europeans envisioned themselves as the inheritors of Ancient Greek knowledge, philosophy, and culture. In reality, the Greeks of 1821 had very little in common with their ancient counterparts. Many knew nothing of what they viewed as a pagan past. As William St. Clair proposes, the connection of Greeks to their ancient identity was a myth, facilitated by Western Europeans' fascination with Greek culture and the presence of Greeks living abroad. In truth, the Greeks had more in common culturally and socially with their Turkish rulers than their Western European Christian brethren.⁸

Nonetheless, Westerners took great interest in the battle for independence of such a noble and storied European people. Greeks living abroad or those attending universities rushed home to assume leadership positions within the revolt. Tension between native Greeks and Westernized Greeks led to multiple civil wars among the

⁷ For analysis of the origins of these ethnicities see Charles Eliot's discussion of groups in Ottoman Europe in Charles Eliot, *Turkey in Europe*, New ed. (London: E. Arnold, 1908), 265-414.

⁸ William St. Clair, *That Greece Might Still Be Free; the Philhellenes in the War of Independence*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), 24-5.

rebels during the fight for independence, indicating the disunity within the movement as well as the cultural division between the two groups.

St. Clair best describes the initial violence in 1821, writing, “the orgy of genocide exhausted itself in Peloponnese only when there were no more Turks to kill.”⁹ Atrocities were being committed against Muslims by Greek bandits and rebels, but Europeans paid little attention to the violence against Muslims in the initial Greek successes. In March 1822, the Ottoman army was ferried to the island of Chios, off the coast of Izmir. The army was followed by unorganized Muslim mobs, not connected to the army or government, in small, private boats. This mob plundered, enslaved, or massacred over five-sixths of the Greek population of the island. Over 20,000 people were killed¹⁰ and over 41,000 enslaved.¹¹ While the violence against civilian Muslims was not reported in the Western press, Chios caused an outrage, becoming a symbol of the massive brutality of the Ottomans for at least a century. Coupled with propaganda from the influential London Greek Committee and the poetry of Lord Byron, the atrocities of Chios helped to create tremendous Philhellene sentiment in Europe.

As a result of a growing tide of public opinion, Philhellenes came from all over Europe to fight for the Greek cause. At first Germans took up the mantle, although the Western volunteers eventually came under the command of French and British officers. The Philhellenes were a mix of Greek sympathizers, adventurers looking for fortunes, and out-of-work professional soldiers from the Napoleonic

⁹ St. Clair, 12.

¹⁰ Anderson, 54.

¹¹ St. Clair, 81.

Wars. However, the poor conditions of the Greek army caused many bright-eyed adventurers to leave, often within days of their arrival in Greece.¹² Professional soldiers' scruples and loyalty were often put to the test. Some defected and were hired to train Muhammad Ali's Egyptian army.¹³ One Corsican Philhellene, Mari, took the name Bekir Agha and became a battalion commander for Muhammad Ali.¹⁴ The initial Philhellene outburst attracted an assortment of volunteers with a large array of motivations for traveling to Greece but, after the initial surge, Philhellenes generally became more dependable soldiers within the Greek forces.

While the loyalty and dedication of the first wave of Philhellenes was questionable, many were inspired by the hopes for freedom for an ancient people and offered their lives to the Greek cause, including Lord Byron himself. The Byron Brigade was entirely funded from private sources, including the resources of the poet.¹⁵ The initial inadequacies, infighting, and failures of the Greek rebels and their Philhellene counterparts would have brought about the swift end to the independence movement without continued open support from Europeans and the tacit support of European governments. The relationship between the rebellion and European governments was complicated. Despite many private sympathies among government officials, the post-Napoleon European Concert could not justify going to war with the Ottoman Empire in defense of rebels against a legitimate ruler.¹⁶

¹² St. Clair's history does an excellent job of explaining the wide variety of motives of Philhellenes through an extensive use of their journals and personal accounts.

¹³ St. Clair, 114.

¹⁴ St. Clair, 89.

¹⁵ St. Clair, 173-184.

¹⁶ St. Clair, 52.

Despite laws such as the Foreign Enlistment Act of 1819, which banned British citizens from serving in a foreign army, Philhellenes went to Greece and were not prosecuted by the British government. British officials often had the opportunity to arrest or detain Greek sympathizers in the Ionians islands, which were under British control, before they arrived on the Greek mainland, yet the government chose to look the other way.¹⁷ Although Foreign Secretary Lord Castlereagh and his successor after September 1822, George Canning, officially took a strong stance of neutrality in the Greek War of Independence, the influence of a supportive public opinion cannot be understated. Leopold von Ranke, a German historian, wrote, “a sympathy such as had never been known before, in which recollections of the classic ages, liberal tendencies, and an universal Christian feeling were united.”¹⁸ In addition to strong public support, there was financial support. In 1824, a £800,000 loan for the Greek cause was issued by the London money market.¹⁹ Another loan from the London Greek Committee was used to build a steam-powered warship, the *Perseverance*. A separate loan from the New York Greek Committee allowed two frigates, the *Hope* and the *Liberator*²⁰ to be built, which helped the Greek forces to continue their struggle from island bases.²¹ Ultimately, however, a great deal of the £800,000 loan was never delivered to the Greek rebels.

¹⁷ St. Clair, 136.

¹⁸ Quoted in Edward Shepherd Creasy, *History of the Ottoman Turks*, 1st ed. (New York: H. Holt and company, 1877), 498.

¹⁹ Anderson, 57.

²⁰ The *Liberator* was sold to the US Navy in order to pay for the completion of the *Hope*, which was renamed the *Hellas*.

²¹ St. Clair, 300-303.

The revamped Ottoman army, combined with the Egyptian army of Muhammad Ali, took back most of the Peloponnesus by 1827, although the Greeks still maintained island bases from which operations were launched. In response, the Egyptian-Turkish fleet was blockaded in Navarino by a combined British-French-Russian fleet. On October 20, after a series of miscommunications escalated, the European fleet sank the Egyptian-Turkish fleet.²² Britain and France had both attempted to avoid destroying the Turkish fleet lest the Ottomans became too weak to thwart Russian ambitions, but they nonetheless participated. The Duke of Wellington summed up this contradiction, stating, “The Sultan destroyed his army and his allies destroyed his navy.”²³ The nervousness of British politicians following the Battle of Navarino illustrated that British fear of Russian power weighed heavily against the government’s general disdain for the Ottomans. Meanwhile, British public opinion, as seen in the editorials of British newspapers, had become ignited and was largely anti-Turk.²⁴ While the government acknowledged public opinion, it did not allow it to direct policy. However, the British navy had done what the public wanted and defeated the Turkish force. Soon thereafter, in 1831, Greece gained its independence.

The Ottoman Empire faced further internal struggle when Muhammad Ali, the *de facto* ruler of Egypt, engaged in war with the Sultan. The Egyptian force, lead by Ibrahim Pasha, Muhammad Ali’s son, invaded Syria in 1831. Multiple successes in the spring and summer of 1832 left Asia Minor open for invasion. Ottoman resistance had been unorganized and feeble. By February 1833, Ibrahim was a mere

²² St. Clair, 331.

²³ Quoted in Creasy, 512.

²⁴ St. Clair, 266.

150 miles from Istanbul. The Sultan was forced to turn to Russia for protection.

Ultimately, Ibrahim was awarded control of the Syrian provinces and the province of Adana in southeastern Turkey in exchange for halting his advance.²⁵

The peace that followed the first invasion was short lived. In April 1839, an Ottoman force invaded Syria only to be utterly defeated by the end of June. Sultan Mahmud II died before news of the defeat reached Istanbul, and Abdülmecid (1839-61), a 16-year-old boy, inherited the throne. The Great Powers, fearing Egyptian independence, decided to intervene. Even France, who had begun to see Egypt as a client—using French military advisors—and as a valuable asset against the British, did not wish to see Egypt fully independent.²⁶ Britain provided the Ottoman force with arms and capable officers while cutting off supply and communication lines between Syria and Egypt. To settle this crisis, the Sultan issued a declaration on February 13, 1841, by which Muhammad Ali was granted his wish, the hereditary position as ruler of Egypt with European backing. However, the Sultan was not forced to cede Syria to him. Although the decree limited the size of the Egyptian army and demanded a tribute, Muhammad Ali was able to resist other proposed restrictions on his power.²⁷

The recognition of Muhammad Ali was not the only decree to come out of European intervention. On November 3, 1839, Abdülmecid issued the *hatt-i sherif* of Gülhane, which declared all subjects, regardless of religion, equal under Ottoman law. The taxation system was to be reformed and conscription, in theory, would

²⁵ Anderson, 78-83.

²⁶ Anderson, 95-97

²⁷ Anderson, 105.

henceforth include Christians. The practical effect of these reforms is debatable but, at the time, Ottoman officials thought that it might allow Europeans to justify their support for a reforming empire. The Tanzimat era, as the era of reforms was known, continued until the 1876 promulgation of Midhat Pasha's constitution. The era was remembered for attempts to modernize the Ottoman state while trying to incorporate non-Muslim subjects into the body politic in an effort to stem the tide of rising nationalism.²⁸

Stratford Canning, the long-serving British ambassador to the Porte, played a role in promoting reform within the declining empire. He often wrote of the need to save the empire but recognized the impossibility of salvation without British aid in reforming the calcified institutions of the empire. Throughout the 1840s and 50s, it was the influence of Canning, a well-known Russophobe, in Istanbul that helped to shape British policy towards the Ottomans.²⁹ During the period between the *hatt-i sherif* and the Crimean War (1853-6), it became obvious that Britain needed to defend the continued existence of the Ottoman Empire as part of a strategy other than *realpolitik*—checking Russian and French regional ambition and defending the passage to India. Of course, these reasons remained important in creating foreign policy, but the goals of British-Ottoman relations were expressed in the British government's desire to see reform and the defense of Christian minorities within the empire. But such reform was hindered by the fact that the Ottoman bureaucracy was by all accounts inefficient and outdated. In 1853, an unprecedented administrative

²⁸ M.E. Yapp, *The Making of the Modern Near East 1792-1923*, (New York: Longman Group, 1987), 108-120.

²⁹ Temperley, "British Policy towards Parliamentary Rule and Constitutionalism in Turkey (1830-1914)," 159.

change occurred when a minister resigned. Prior to this, ministers served until death or dismissal by the Sultan. The Sultan accepted the decision but saw the resignation as an affront to his absolute power.³⁰

Much of this support for Ottoman reform coincided with the political rise of Lord Palmerston. Palmerston had played a role in the mid-19th-century as Foreign Secretary from 1830-4, 1835-41, and 1846-51, finally serving as Prime Minister from 1855-58 and again from 1859-65. Palmerston defended the need for Ottoman reform, however, his attitude towards the Ottoman government was more complex. Despite being a fierce constitutionalist, advocating Britain's financial support for people fighting for a constitution in Spain and Portugal and vocally backing constitutional forces in Piedmont and Belgium, he never actively supported a constitutional movement within the Ottoman Empire.³¹ For Palmerston, it was more than suitable to support an autocratic, repressive regime in exchange for regional stability. Reforming and modernizing tax collecting and the army, while putting forth nominal Christian equality, was enough to satisfy a 1850s British Liberal to justify a friendly position towards the Ottoman regime.

Concessions made by the Ottoman government in the early 1850s concerning its European territory were due to intense pressure applied by the Austrian and Russian governments. Armistices were signed with Montenegro, and provincial governors were removed at the request of foreign diplomats. Not only did this create

³⁰ Temperley, "British Policy towards Parliamentary Rule and Constitutionalism in Turkey (1830-1914)," 161.

³¹ Temperley, "British Policy towards Parliamentary Rule and Constitutionalism in Turkey (1830-1914)," 157-158.

resentment in Istanbul, but it also gave Russia the impression that the Sultan was willing to concede if sufficiently bullied.³²

Tsar Nicholas I (1825-55) sent A.S. Menshikov in 1853 to negotiate Russia's right to intervene within Ottoman affairs in cases involving the protection of Orthodox Christians. The Porte rejected this diplomatic mission. Historian M.S. Anderson speculates that the presence of the anti-Russian Canning was able to strengthen the anti-Russian camp of Turkish bureaucrats.³³ Upon hearing of the rejection, Nicholas threatened to invade the Ottoman Empire. Britain and France were firmly supportive of the Ottomans. While no nation wanted a war, the blustering by both sides during the talks made a resolution of the conflict through means other than war impossible.

In September 1853, riots in Istanbul pushed Turkey towards war with Russia. The British and French sent warships through the Dardanelles into the Sea of Marmara to protect Europeans in the capital. Following initial blustering, Britain moved its squadrons stationed in Besika Bay to Istanbul. War seemed ever more imminent. Canning attempted to delay the movement of troops to the capital, hoping peace could be reached, but by November, the Ottoman Empire and Russia were involved in yet another Russo-Turkish war.³⁴ Skirmishes in the Balkans, Caucasus region, and Black Sea occurred in the early part of the war. On March 28, London and Paris declared war on Russia, committing themselves to the defense of the Ottomans. The tremendous anti-Russian public opinion in Britain, coupled with a

³² Anderson, 119-120.

³³ Anderson, 121-123.

³⁴ Anderson, 128.

divided cabinet, rushed the British head-first into a conflict that all parties had wanted to avoid.³⁵

With no hope of a Russian victory, peace seemed increasingly more likely during the course of 1855. The Russian defeat in the Crimean War led to the neutralization of the Black Sea and the withdrawal of Russian forces from the Balkans. The initial peace proposal was developed without any input from Istanbul. Thus, the Ottoman Empire was also barred from having fleets in the Black Sea and special provisions were made for protecting Ottoman Christians. Official peace talks began in February 1856 in Paris. The Treaty of Paris, signed March 30, 1856, sought to protect the Ottoman government from Russian pressures, which had been the cause of the war. First, it protected the Ottoman's place within the Concert of Europe, guaranteeing future mediation with a third power before hostilities occurred. This was done in exchange for guarantees for Ottoman Christians. On February 18, the *hatt-i humayun* was declared, proclaiming religious equality for all within the empire.³⁶ This was, from the British's perspective, a step towards permanently resolving the "Eastern Question," by making the Ottoman Empire a viable, reformed power.

The Crimean War highlighted the complete distrust, both amongst the British public and politicians, for Russia. Russophobia was at an all-time high in the 1850s as a reaction to growing Russian influence in the Balkans. Britain had been willing to enter into tacit alliances with France and the Ottomans in order to check Russian power. The British public was even at times sympathetic to the Ottoman cause. The

³⁵ Anderson, 131.

³⁶ Anderson, 140-143.

aftermath of the Crimean War created a reliance on Britain as a guarantor of the Ottoman state that formed the fundamental basis of British policy towards the Sultanate for the next 20 years.

During the period between the Treaty of Paris and the Bulgarian massacres in 1876, Britain attempted to play a militarily less active role in preserving the Ottoman Empire. Officials in the Foreign Office questioned the Ottoman state's prospects for survival, as they were disheartened by the Ottomans' failure to deliver on promises of reform. The independence of Balkan states increasingly seemed inevitable. But the struggles for future independent states in Europe were not the only territorial concerns of the Ottomans.

In May 1860, Lebanon erupted into civil war between Druses and Maronites. In July, Christians were massacred in the city of Damascus in Syria. France, who traditionally took interest in the Levant, decided to send an armed expedition to intervene. Britain in particular was suspicious of the intervention, which potentially increased French influence in the region. Furthermore, Britain feared allowing the French to set a new precedent for intervention on behalf of Christians that could justify a future invasion by Russia. The occupying force, which totaled 12,000 troops—6,000 of which were French—stayed until June 1861.³⁷ While the French did eventually withdraw, to the relief of Britain, the damage was done. The alliance forged during the Crimean War based on mutual anti-Russian sentiment was destroyed.

³⁷ Anderson, 156-157.

A revolt in Crete beginning in 1866, nascent Bulgarian and Pan Slavism nationalist movements, conflict in Serbia, and the rise of the Young Ottoman movement contributed to, and signaled to the European powers, Ottoman internal instability during the 1860s. The earlier threat of European powers destroying the empire was eclipsed by the threat of destruction from within. During this time, Britain remained implicitly in the pro-Ottoman camp while alliances shifted among the European powers. This was further complicated with the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. In 1875, Ismail Pasha, ruler of Egypt, was bankrupt and forced to give his shares in the canal to the British government. However, the French still held a majority of the company's shares.³⁸ The canal provided another passage to India and a tremendous zone of influence in the Near East. Britain was becoming increasingly invested in Egypt, which provided an alternative to an alliance with the Ottomans. Istanbul's importance concerning trade and protection of traveling British subjects was of waning importance. The British interests in Egypt made the Anglo-Ottoman alliance even more troubled. Still, the Ottomans were far from abandoned, especially when it came to staving off Russian influence or occupation.

It was clear to those in the British government that the fate of the Ottoman Empire was far from settled. The European powers ultimately desired Ottoman partition, but the rate of its disintegration was severely hampered and monitored by Britain, which sought to fend off its European competitors. Economic issues made the situation more difficult. British investors had personal stakes in the empire's

³⁸ Anderson, 208-209.

survival. From 1865 to 1876, the Sultan's government was forced to take out loans just to pay back existing debt.³⁹

The events leading up to the Bulgarian massacres and the subsequent British responses set the stage for the outcry against the Ottoman government in 1876. The Great Powers of Europe—Britain, France, Austria, and Russia—each had a stake in the partition of the Ottoman Empire, but no such division could be made peacefully. Thus, the empire floundered with consistent meddling by foreign powers. Serbia had set a precedent for Balkan nationalist movements, and Greece demonstrated the power of European public opinion that could be rallied against the Ottomans. The British increasingly worried about the expansion of Russian influence and power. Over the course of the 19th-century, hopes for Ottoman reform that were necessary to reinvigorate the empire required progressively greater investment by the British, while going to war to preserve its geographic integrity became necessary. Diplomatically, political intrigue and shifting of alliances characterize the 19th-century. However, both British politicians and the public had proven to be fickle, and the British government remained without unsubstantial moral justification to support the Ottomans while Russia and France championed the defense of Ottoman Christians. The ephemeral nature of Anglo-Turkish relations makes sense when seen in the context of quickly shifting political ententes of the era. For Britain, nothing was owed to the Ottomans that did not involve the protection of Britain's best interests.

³⁹ Anderson, 174.

Images of the Turk in the West

While the political intrigue and international events of the 19th-century set the stage for a diplomatic response, the ingrained images of the Turks set the stage for the social outcry in Britain surrounding the events of 1876. Andrew Wheatcroft's work *The Ottomans* discusses the cultivation of these popular stereotypes particularly reproduced through images in the print media. Wheatcroft focuses on the popular ideas of the "Lustful Turk," known for his insatiable sexual desires, and the "Terrible Turk," represented by sheer brutality, Islamic fanaticism, and uncivilized behavior. While images viewed in popular print culture definitely helped these negative perceptions to develop and persist, they also infiltrated British academic discourse. Historians employed ethnic and religious generalizations, peppering their works with attacks against the Turks and further instilling the notions of Turkish inhumanity in British culture.

It is important to recognize a historiographical shift in the presentation of the Ottoman Empire. Historians writing after the Great War and the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, exemplified by M.S. Anderson, M.E. Yapp, and Marian Kent, have removed the ethnic and religious overtones from their writing. Their social and political histories focus on the actions, interactions, and character of diplomats and sultans. The histories prior to the end of the empire, however, exemplified in the works of Edward Creasy, William Curtis, and Charles Eliot, utilized stereotypes in their discussions of the "character of the Turks." In doing so, they employed sweeping ethnic generalizations that were popular in 19th-century Britain. Their works, written at the height of the British Empire, promoted notions of ethnic

stereotypes and superiority. These earlier commentators on the Ottoman Empire, even when attempting to discuss positive qualities of the Ottomans, always came back to the stereotype of the “yoke of the Turks”⁴⁰ imposed by a cruel people on their Christian subjects in Europe.

There is an important distinction to make between anti-Muslim and anti-Turkish depictions during this period. Anti-Muslim imagery harkened back to the Crusades, while the ethnic, anti-Turkish images were more recent. These ethnic images developed when the Turks posed a threat to Christian Europe at a time when Christian solidarity was low.⁴¹ Turks were Europe’s ‘other’ in a time when Muslims were becoming incorporated into European global empires. Turkish religious fanaticism and subjugation of Christian subjects became a hallmark of European stereotyping, yet it was not rooted primarily in their faith but rather in their ethnicity, out of consideration for colonized Muslims as subjects of European empires.

Without a doubt, anti-Muslim images persisted to some extent. In a piece on Islam in 1799, *Life* magazine printed, “Caligula, Nero, Domitian, and Judas Iscariot would be ashamed to associate with [Muhammad] in the regions of the damned.”⁴² The notion that many fundamentally good people had been corrupted and became uncivilized due to the deceit of Muhammad was popular throughout the 19th-century, as it had been in the century before. William Denton, a British Reverend, wrote, “Barbarians never cease to be barbarians, if barbarism is an essential element of their

⁴⁰ Creasy, 495.

⁴¹ Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image*, (Edinburgh: University Press, 1966), 269.

⁴² Daniel, 287.

national religion.”⁴³ The persistence of anti-Muslim images certainly should be acknowledged although, due to political developments, anti-Turkish imagery eclipsed it.

By the 19th-century, British political figures were forced to realize the new position of Muslims within their empire. Lord Cromer, the British Consul-General of Egypt from 1883-1907, wrote, “Moslems of India should recognize that, with the collapse of Turkish power in Europe, a new order of things has arisen, that the change which the attitude of England...does not in the smallest degree connote unfriendliness to Islam.”⁴⁴ William Gladstone also perpetuated this notion. One of the greatest castigators of Turkish ethnicity, Gladstone praised the nobility of other Muslims, mentioning “the mild Mahomotans of India,” “the chivalrous Saladins of Syria,” and “the cultured Moors of Spain.”⁴⁵ It was quite possible for British politicians and diplomats to speak derogatively of Turks without alienating other Muslims.

The violent and lustful depictions of Turks were often seen in the writings of historians and diplomats. Regardless of some personal sympathies felt by Orientalists, the point of these depictions was to make Turks into an ‘other,’ marking them distinctly as non-European. Lord Cromer did this best, writing, “The Turks, who have always been strangers in Europe, have shown conspicuous inability to

⁴³ *Personal Recollections of Turkish Misrule and Corruption in Syria with an Introduction by the Rev. Wm. Denton, M.A.*, (London: Cassel Petter & Galpin, 1877), 3.

⁴⁴ Cromer, 412.

⁴⁵ W.E. Gladstone, *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*, (London: John Murray, 1876), 12.

comply with the elementary requirements of European civilization.”⁴⁶ Despite the acceptance of the Ottoman Empire into the Concert of Europe, the British public refused to recognize Turks as Europeans, depicting them as “of the same primitive stock as the Tartars and Mongols.”⁴⁷

Charles Eliot attempted to explain the Turks’ terrible and lustful nature. He came to the conclusion that Turks were inherent travelers. “As soon as a province passes under another government, the Turk finds it the most natural thing in the world to leave it and go somewhere else.”⁴⁸ It was this failure to assimilate to civilized norms that helped to support the perception that the Ottomans were fundamentally non-European. They were simply travelers, visiting in Europe until they were inevitably forced to move on. Eliot ascribed the Turks’ vices to this spirit, writing, “Traveling generates an immoral habit of mind.”⁴⁹ He also hypothesized that their violent nature was tied to the fact that they “make nothing at all; [a Turk] takes whatever he can get as plunder or pillage.”⁵⁰ To Orientalists, such as Eliot, Turks were not fundamentally evil, but this lifestyle had made them prone to immorality.

Charles Eliot was not alone in his depictions amongst his contemporary historians. Edward Creasy discussed the Turks’ “morbid fondness for practicing petty tyranny over creatures weaker than themselves.”⁵¹ William Curtis wrote of the filth of Turks and their cities, implying a moral inferiority in the process. R. Grant

⁴⁶ Cromer, 413.

⁴⁷ R. Grant Barnwell, *The Russo-Turkish War: Comprising an Account of the Servian Insurrection, the Dreadful Massacre of Christians in Bulgaria and other Turkish Atrocities...*, (Philadelphia: Keystone Publishing co., 1877), 266.

⁴⁸ Eliot, 90.

⁴⁹ Eliot, 91.

⁵⁰ Eliot, 91.

⁵¹ Creasy, 108.

Barnwell wrote, the Ottomans “are strangers bearing rule over other nations, over Mohammedans in Asia, over Christians in Europe.”⁵² These depictions, which do go deeper than the typical image of “Terrible Turk” found in popular culture, demonstrate British academia’s acceptance and promotion of ethnically charged depictions.

The Turkish characteristics of cruelty and lustfulness have been extensively examined, but other negative portrayals relating directly to the events of the mid-19th-century also existed. One was the uncivilized nature of Turks, which in turn was related to their incapability to reform. British politicians debated the merits of propping up the Ottoman government and the need for a modern Turkish state. Whether the Ottoman state could realistically continue to exist and thwart off European states’ advances and territorial demands. The Earl of Clarendon, British Foreign Secretary in the 1860s and an outspoken proponent of anti-Turkish policy, was one such diplomat who did not believe in Turks’ ability to reform or become “civilized.” His prescription for Turkish improvement was harsh, stating, “the only way to improve them is to improve them off the face of the earth.”⁵³ Gladstone also doubted Turks’ ability to adopt European refinement and civilization. In his pamphlet, *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*, he wrote, “The elaborate and refined cruelty—the only refinement of which Turkey boasts!—the utter disregard of sex and age—the abominable and bestial lust—and the utter and violent

⁵² Barnwell, 284.

⁵³ Temperley, “British Policy towards Parliamentary Rule and Constitutionalism in Turkey (1830-1914),” 165.

lawlessness which still stalks over the land.”⁵⁴ Even among the British elite, which had political motivations for supporting the Ottoman government, there did not seem to be much confidence that positive reform was possible.

It is easy to fixate on in the negative images of Turks, however, there were also sympathetic depictions. Nearly all of the 19th-century historians portrayed Turks positively in two areas: as industrious peasants and as brave and natural soldiers. Eliot wrote, “The moment a sword or rifle is put into his hand, he instinctively knows how to use it with effect, and feels at home in the ranks or on a horse.”⁵⁵ In fact, he believed, “Every Turk is born a soldier, and adopts other pursuits because the times are bad.”⁵⁶ This seems to support an argument for the need to support Ottoman reform and modernization, the idea being that Turks would be capable of militarily defending themselves with a modern army and European-styled leadership. The Turks’ bravery on the battlefield and natural inclination towards soldiering appears to be the mirror image of their “terrible” depictions as plunderers, rapists, and brutes. The perception often was that their battlefield zeal was misguided or simply related to religious fanaticism.

Norman Daniel recounts an 18th-century travelogue of Lord Charlemonte in Istanbul, who was surprised when the Turkish vices perpetuated in popular culture appeared to be little more than a myth. He disclosed that the prostitutes of the city were mostly Christians—Armenians and Greeks—not Turks,⁵⁷ known for their

⁵⁴ Gladstone, *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*, 33.

⁵⁵ Eliot, 93.

⁵⁶ Eliot, 93.

⁵⁷ It should be noted that it was common for Europeans to refer to any Muslim in Ottoman Europe or Anatolia as a “Turk” regardless of their ethnicity.

insatiable lust. Consequently, he attributed the city's immorality to Christians even more than Turks. However, he admitted that he was forced to speculate about the impossibility of some commonly accepted Muslim practices due the inaccessibility of the harem.⁵⁸

Eliot described Turks as hospitable, good-humored, hard working, and honest, although he also mentioned that they were extraordinarily limited in knowledge and interest, as well as lazy.⁵⁹ While Orientalists often attempted to enlighten the public about positive qualities of Turks, double standards infused their accounts. Creasy wrote of Kara George, leader of the Serbian rebellion, as a ferocious man, "However arbitrary we may think his actions...he unquestioningly saved his country, and for many years maintained her independence."⁶⁰ The fierceness and brutal actions of Christians were justified because they were fighting, in Creasy's eyes, for a just cause. The characterization as warriors in a just cause is never extended to the Turks.

There is another important distinction to be made between depictions of the Turks as a people and the Ottoman state. Even Gladstone fundamentally faulted the Ottoman government, and not Turkish ethnicity, writing, "No government ever has so sinned; none has so proved itself incorrigible in sin, or which is the same, so impotent for reformation."⁶¹ Lord Cromer wrote of the Sultanate's "unbridled and malevolent despotism."⁶² While the Ottoman Empire was often fundamentally conceived to be

⁵⁸ Daniel, 221.

⁵⁹ Eliot, 95.

⁶⁰ Creasy, 471.

⁶¹ Gladstone, *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*, 63.

⁶² Cromer, 267.

Turkish, the low opinion of the government seemed to ameliorate some of the negative depictions of the Turks as a people.

While the brutality and intellectual limitations of Turks were features of 19th-century historical writing, it is important to remember that many of these Orientalists had an affinity for or, at the very least, a fascination with, the Ottoman Empire and Turkish culture. Their use of negative stereotypes was usually coupled with the positive ones or, at the very least, those that were apologist in nature. However, they had little confidence in the Ottoman government and provided no justification for its style of rule. Eliot, one of the leading Turcophiles, wrote,

The evils of Turkish rule are undeniable; they exist at the present day, and are much the same as they always were. Anti-Turkish writers speak of the entrance of the Turks into Europe as if a barbarian invasion had suddenly overwhelmed the industrious Slavs and the cultivated Greek, and destroyed a peaceful and orderly civilization.⁶³

Being anti-Ottoman did not necessarily mean being anti-Turk, and it certainly did not mean being unable to point out the double standards of blatantly anti-Turkish writers. However, as it has been seen, many of these academics fell victim to the double standards that they warned against.

Gladstone and many others overlooked the atrocities and brutalities of Europeans when passing judgment on Turks as a people. Wheatcroft suggests this is related to the persisting imaginings of Turks as lustful and violent. As far as the British were concerned, “Turks enjoyed killing, and enjoyed rape and torture even

⁶³ Eliot, 53-54.

more.”⁶⁴ Turkish sadism was at the heart of their inhumane crimes. British cruelties were always driven by justice, not pleasure, and thus were more justifiable.

Norman Daniel theorized that the attitude of a society is based on the degree of hostility it feels, not the solidity of the argument. In the case of the Turks, Europeans were not just discrediting a rival religion but expressing hostility at a foreign civilization at its borders.⁶⁵ The Ottomans had always filled the place of the ‘other’ in the minds of Christian Europeans. However, unlike the case in earlier centuries, they no longer had the military prowess or economic independence to support that role. As a political entity, the Ottoman state looked increasingly flawed. Thus, the imagery was refocused as Turks threatening Europeans’ sensibilities and their way of life, taking the form of sex, “lustfulness,” and violence, “terribleness” against helpless Christians. It was this sentiment that caused the British to view the atrocities in Bulgaria in 1876 as extremely violent and morally offensive. The depictions served as proof that the Turks were uncivilized, inhumane and, perhaps most importantly, non-European. Ottoman actions served to reinforce existing images, reshaped to meet the weakened state of the Ottoman Empire. These images served to shape public opinion and outrage, which is why Gladstone, one of Britain’s most prominent politicians, was able to say that Turks “were, upon the whole, from the black day when they first entered Europe, the one great anti-human specimen of humanity.”⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Andrew Wheatcroft, *The Ottomans: Dissolving Images*. 1st ed. (London: Viking, 1993), 236.

⁶⁵ Daniel, 267-268.

⁶⁶ Gladstone, *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*, 12.

Concluding Thoughts, 1798-1876

The “Eastern Question,” the phrase used to describe European policy towards the Ottoman Empires and, on a more conceptual level, what was to be done with the Turks, pervaded newspapers, parliaments, and everyday debates during the 19th-century. The Prussian statesman Otto von Bismarck believed that the “Eastern Question” “only interests Europe through its effect upon the relations of the Great Powers among themselves.”⁶⁷ And, to some extent, this was true; the Ottoman Empire became a diplomatic battleground in a war between European powers. However, an attempt to resolve the “Eastern Question” permanently came to the forefront of the European political agenda in 1878, following the events in Bulgaria, and then more or less disappeared until the end of the century and rise of the CUP in the early 20th-century. Had the “Eastern Question” really been answered or did the question being asked just change?

Czar Alexander I of Russia said, “The sick man is dying. We have on our hands a sick man—a very sick man, and he may suddenly die on our hands.”⁶⁸ Considering the Ottomans’ numerous wars with Russia, constant revolts supported by European powers, political intrigue, and breaking of alliances—along with the unthinkable political and economic concessions granted throughout this century—perhaps the Czar should have said, he may suddenly die *at* our hands. The Ottoman Empire had become the arena for territorial and economic pickings by Europe. While there were times that Britain tried to prop it up, under the auspices of supporting

⁶⁷ Norman Dwight Harris, “The Effect of the Balkan Wars on European Alliances and the Future of the Ottoman Empire,” in *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 8, no. 1 (February 1914), 106.

⁶⁸ Creasy, 535.

much needed reforms, the British actually were much more interested in preventing further Russian expansion in the area.

After 1878, British policy moved away from the Ottomans, who became increasingly intertwined politically and economically with Russia and Germany. The once zero-sum game of European politics was beginning to be interpreted differently. The Ottomans could now be divided, territorially and economically, among the various powers. Russia in the Caucasus region, France in Syria and Lebanon, and Britain in Egypt and Iraq came to be an acceptable situation. Such an agreement would have been unacceptable at the beginning of the century. Based on the changing nature of European politics, the inability of Ottoman rulers to reform, and the outcome of the Conference of Berlin in 1878, the nature of Anglo-Ottoman relations fundamentally changed.

Despite horrific depictions of the Turks, especially regarding ethnic and religious issues, the British government ignored public opinion and continued to support the increasingly unpopular Ottoman Empire. However, following the events and public outrage in 1876, this became increasingly untenable. And, if it were possible, it was certainly not preferable. The events and responses to the Bulgarian massacres fundamentally changed the positive relationship between British and Ottoman statesmen and established a more adversarial one that persisted until the collapse of the empire in 1918.

Chapter 2: The Influence and Innovation of *The Times* in 19th-Century Britain

Brief History of *The Times*

In March 1784, John Walter took control of King's Printing House; less than a year later, on January 1, 1785, he published the first issue of *The Daily Universal Registrar*.¹ The fledgling, upstart paper struggled in its early years despite its low cost of only two pence-one halfpenny, which was a halfpenny less than other London dailies. Three years later, Walter changed the name to *The Times and the Daily Universal Registrar*. The name was shortened to *The Times* on March 17, 1788. Through all these changes, the issue and volume numbers remained consecutive, representing continuity from the newspaper's debut.² The paper's first decade was far from brilliant. In fact, it is hard to believe that *The Times* of the 18th-century shared much with *The Times* of the 19th-century. However, John Walter seems to have instilled in the institution vigor, ingenuity, and innovation that served as a foundation for the paper's rise to prominence and influence.

Walter strove to be technically innovative and politically independent. Printing techniques available in his day were similar to those invented by Guttenberg in 1440. Walter experimented with logographical printing. Rather than the printer having to place each letter individually, syllables were connected and common words permanently blocked. Although Walter fiercely advocated this system as being more efficient, in reality it was no faster than traditional printing methods.³ From its

¹ William Dodgson Bowman, *The Story of "The Times,"* (New York: The Dial Press, 1931), 39.

² Bowman, 54.

³ *The Times: Past, Present Future,* (London: The Office of The Times, 1932), 6.

inception, *The Times* was an independent paper, refusing to accept money from political parties. Thus, with no allegiance owed to any political party or ideology, the paper was capable of determining its own editorial policy that often cut across party lines.

In 1803, John Walter II took over his father's day-to-day responsibilities of managing and editing the paper.⁴ He focused on two main principles: "One was that his paper must be free of all obligation to the Government. The other was that the public had a right to know all the news and to know it without delay."⁵ These guiding principles resulted in a commitment to investing in technology, which allowed for expedient reporting from around the world, honest critiques of the government, and the demand for governmental transparency.

From its early days, *The Times* was known for the speed at which it reported foreign news. Reports on the capture of Flushing in 1809 were printed 48 hours before the government received news of the event through official couriers.⁶ In 1792, foreign news offices were established in Paris and Brussels. Foreign correspondent Henry Crabb Robinson was sent to France and Spain in 1807 and 1808, respectively.⁷

Like his father, John Walter II became fascinated with printing technology. In 1812, Frederick Koenig invented the first steam printing press; Walter secretly hired Koenig to build a press for *The Times*. On November 29, 1814, the first steam printed newspapers were sold. Three to four thousand copies, roughly the circulation

⁴ Bowman, 92.

⁵ *The Times*:..., 12.

⁶ *The Times*:..., 13.

⁷ Oliver Woods and James Bishop, *The Story of The Times*, (London: Michael Joseph Limited, 1983), 14.

of *The Times*, could be printed in just three hours, compared to the old method that consumed nine to ten hours.⁸ Steam-powered printing revolutionized the newspaper industry. Soon after, Walter became more involved with printing and managing the business, leaving the editing to others. Dr. John Stoddart was the first to hold the title of Editor, however, his interim was short. Editorship soon fell to a 32-year-old Parliamentary reporter, Thomas Barnes.⁹

Under Barnes, the paper became more popular and profitable, as well as increasingly political. The paper's circulation grew significantly, and support for Tory political policies became quite obvious. However, it was also outspokenly opposed to slavery and the Corn Laws and was a strong proponent of the Reform Bill of 1832.¹⁰ *The Times* took up the cause of reform, winning the support of many middle class Londoners. Believing that *The Times* could sway public opinion, the Tory Party actively sought out Barnes' support in order to reestablish its political power. Barnes agreed to offer support in exchange for the following demands: no change in foreign policy, no mutilation of the Reform Bill, and the adoption of the reforms sanctioned by the last Parliament. These demands were taken very seriously and acted upon by the Cabinet, which caused Lord Lyndhurst, the Lord Chancellor, to proclaim, "Barnes is the most powerful man in the country."¹¹

On May 7, 1841, Barnes suddenly died. The position of Editor was passed to a 23-year-old, Oxford-educated reporter and family friend of the Walters, John Delane. With the help of the expertise of the paper's business managers, an unrivaled

⁸ Bowman, 93-95.

⁹ Bowman, 105-106.

¹⁰ *The Times*: ..., 16.

¹¹ Quoted in Woods and Bishop, 58.

news staff, and a network of foreign offices, the young Delane made a smooth transition into the leadership of editorial policy.¹² Barnes had transformed the paper into a domestic powerhouse, but under Delane its influence in Europe reached its ascendancy, making *The Times* one of the 19th-century's most influential news media.

John Delane, *Times* Editor

John Delane brought *The Times* to its zenith of influence through his ability to make and maintain social contacts and control editorial policy. He generally entertained more liberal points of view, such as recognizing that Irish discontent was the result of English misgovernment.¹³ These liberal tendencies helped him to foster close relationships with Lord Aberdeen, the Peelite Prime Minister¹⁴ in the 1850s, and Lord Palmerston.¹⁵ Both Aberdeen and Palmerston served as informants for Delane during their stints in the Foreign Office. These friendships created an alliance between *The Times* and the Foreign Office. In exchange for receiving information, Delane supported the Foreign Office even while opposing the rest of Peel's government.¹⁶ Palmerston expressed his jealousy of the efficiency of *The Times*' foreign operations. *The Times*' couriers were said to "frequently outdistance the

¹² Bowman, 148-150.

¹³ Bowman, 11.

¹⁴ While Peelites were associated with the Conservative Party, they represented a more liberal wing of the party, opposed to the landed aristocracy, who were against free trade.

¹⁵ Arthur Irwin Dasent, *John Thadeus Delane, Editor of "The Times:" His Life and Correspondence*, vol. 2, (London: John Murray, 1908), 152.

¹⁶ Bowman, 157.

government's couriers by two or three days."¹⁷ Yet, Palmerston and Delane developed a relationship that served the interests and needs of both.

In his political worldview, Delane can best be characterized as a Palmerstonian Liberal. His domestic policies favored the middle class over the aristocracy. Concerning foreign affairs, he put British interests first, was generally non-interventionist and, except in the case of Crimea, was opposed to war.¹⁸ While he generally supported Gladstone's policy towards Ireland, Delane was largely unsympathetic to Gladstone's brand of liberalism.¹⁹ And, despite personally admiring Disraeli, a former *Times* contributor, Delane never gave him political support in the paper. Regardless of his liberal leanings, Delane was "in the confidence of both parties" and a "consort with the inner circle of cabinets."²⁰

On November 8, 1877, Delane officially retired, handing over editorship of *The Times* to Thomas Chenery.²¹ While Delane did not write many articles himself, he maintained close editorial watch over all that was printed in his newspaper.²² He stressed the importance of lead articles, trying to publish at least four in every issue. Delane editorially oversaw over 40,000 such articles.²³ At 51-years-old, Chenery was older than both of his predecessors at the time of assuming the position of editor. Chenery gave consistent and indiscriminating support to the Conservative Party. As

¹⁷ Edward Porritt, "The Government and the Newspaper Press in England," in *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 12, no. 4 (December 1897), 676.

¹⁸ Woods and Bishop, 115.

¹⁹ Dasent, 237.

²⁰ *The Times*: ..., 18.

²¹ Dasent, 335.

²² Bowman, 192.

²³ *The Times*: ..., 24.

a result, some members of the staff with liberal views joined more liberal competitors.²⁴

The Power of the Press in 19th-Century

Although the perception regarding the power of the press may have varied, undeniably the press became increasingly more powerful and influential over the course of the 19th-century. In 1850, the surgeon and journalist Frederick Knight Hunt proclaimed, “The newspaper press wields the power of a FOURTH ESTATE.”²⁵ Charles Pebody did not quite agree with this prognosis, instead viewing the press as “a second representation of the Third Estate, a form of ‘Popular Parliament’ in a polity that did not yet allow for universal suffrage.”²⁶ The role the press played in British society could clearly be vehemently argued, however, the reality of the power and influence of the press was undeniable. At the top was one of the most influential institutions in 19th-century Britain, *The Times*.

The role of newspapers in British society was expanding and becoming increasingly more significant. While Walter’s initial principles for *The Times*—retaining independence and providing expedient, high quality news—were still the fundamentals for sound journalism, as the press became more entrenched in society, it assumed much more ambitious roles. Joseph Cowen, editor for the *Newcastle Chronicle*, believed, “The function of newspapers was not to provide news and entertainment alone, but to challenge established practices, popular assumptions and

²⁴ Bowman, 282.

²⁵ Aled Jones, *Powers of the Press: Newspapers, Power and the Public in Nineteenth-Century England*, (Aldershot, England: Scolar Press, 1996), 52.

²⁶ Jones, 61.

political power.²⁷ For others, newspapers were seen as a civilizing force; they promoted education, refinement, freedom, and democracy. As Aled Jones points out, “Every class had its own organ, every topic finds a journal, every interest has a friend in the press.”²⁸

Many believed that the power of the press had potential for tremendous influence not only over governments, but also in its capacity to incite the masses. Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* discusses the power of print culture in nation-building.²⁹ Jones believes that newspapers impressed,

Their values and prejudices immediately and simultaneously upon many thousands of minds, possessed a power of such unprecedented magnitude that it was not surprising that the public generally could have ‘no adequate conception of it, because it is so infinitely above and beyond any other popular medium of intelligence with which it may be compared.’³⁰

Of course, what should not be overlooked is that newspapers were driven by the editorial policy of a few people or often just a single person. Newspaper editors wielded so much power that they caused substantial debate over the need to curb the power and influence of the press.

Indeed, there was debate over whether news media dictated public opinion or simply represented it. This was an era before public opinion polls, and so the

²⁷ Jones, 49.

²⁸ Jones, 91.

²⁹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd ed., (London: Verso, 1991).

³⁰ Jones, 98.

perception of the media having influence on public opinion is not easily tested. But, considering the context of the 19th-century, in which newspapers monopolized the flow of information, this debate was both heated and ongoing. One observer noted, “[The press was] the greatest combination and concentration of forces known in the intellectual world.”³¹ Lord Lyndhurst’s reference to Barnes as the most powerful man in Britain perfectly represented this opinion. Newspapers seemingly held incredible power, and *The Times* was perhaps the most powerful of the British press. Ministers were envious of *The Times*’ influence and, more often than not, felt obligated to be supportive and provide information, “hoping by these services to soften antagonism or gain support.”³²

The British statesman JW Croker believed that *The Times* did not epitomize the public’s mood at all but, rather, “they assumed that they represent public opinion, and of course the people, in a more direct and authoritative manner, than even the House of Commons.”³³ Croker would not deny that *The Times* had an uncanny ability to set a public and political agenda through its continual and thorough coverage of important events, but he certainly did not believe that the paper followed the public’s consensus. In fact, *The Times* was often simultaneously accused of being the voice of oligarchy, the voice of reform, and that of the people.

Some 19th-century commentators accused *The Times* of being swayed by the mood of the public rather than swaying it, and diverging from its editorial policy in order to meet the public’s desire. There is some evidence to support this accusation.

³¹ Quoted in Jones, 98.

³² Bowman, 13.

³³ Quoted in Jones, 162.

Barnes sometimes adopted a “safety first” course, not weighing in on a subject until the general mood of the public was firmly established.³⁴ Delane may have been demonstrating a similar style when he became a supporter of the very popular Crimean War despite always previously advocating mediation over war. While there are some cases of *The Times* having a vague, wavering policy, 20th-century commentators tend to remember the paper as being “guided by a carefully formulated policy, and so far from being led by public opinion, it had often formed and educated it.”³⁵

Readership-Circulation and the Class of Readers

The circulation of *The Times* helps to demonstrate its potent power. In 1836, the circulation was approximately 10,000 copies daily. Placed in reading rooms of clubs, or read aloud, most papers were read by multiple people. By 1855, circulation reached 60,000. Most of *The Times*' 1836 competitors were no longer in print by this time.³⁶ During the Crimean War, circulation was over 70,000, thanks to the reporting of war correspondent William Howard Russell. Under Delane's tenure, circulation never fell below 50,000 after the Crimean War.³⁷ During Delane's first 15 years as Editor, circulation rose from an average of 20,000 to over 58,000. This was more than triple the circulation of the rest of London daily papers.³⁸

³⁴ Bowman, 121.

³⁵ Bowman, 121.

³⁶ Woods and Bishop, 56.

³⁷ *The Times*:..., 18.

³⁸ J. Don Vann, “The ‘Times,’ the ‘Morning Chronicle,’ and the Newspaper Stamp Tax,” in *Victorian Periodical Newsletter*, vol. 5, no. 4, (December, 1972), 36-41. *The Times* sold more than 110,000 more papers than *The Morning Herald*, *The Morning*

The Times framed itself as the voice of middle class opinion, in the face of landed aristocratic power. While politicians felt it necessary to ascertain the pulse of Britain through *The Times*, the bulk of the readership was comprised by upper-middle class Londoners, along with some artisans and clerical workers. In 1851, the professional class in London consisted of 357,000 people, while *The Times*' circulation was consistently around 60,000. Readership had included more non-London readers before the repeal of the Stamp Duty, which saw a rise in provincial papers that were capable of getting news—both domestic and international—at a speed almost equal to *The Times*. Although some provincial readership was lost, there was a noticeable rise in readership among women, the lower-middle class, and Nonconformist Christians.³⁹ In 1855, Right Hon. Edward Ellice wrote to Lord John Russell, “*The Times* has become omnipotent and despotic from the consummate ability with which it is conducted. It is on this account read with avidity by all classes and by men of all parties.”⁴⁰

Due to the independent nature of *The Times*, people of all political persuasions read the paper. Politicians read articles and made reference to them in Parliamentary speeches. Benjamin Disraeli, the Prime Minister in 1868 and again from 1874-1880, even worked as a contributor when he was a young politician. The few politicians

Chronicle, and *The Morning Post* combined in a three-month period in 1840. Vann calculated these figures based on stamps bought from Parliament.

³⁹ Woods and Bishop, 27.

⁴⁰ Quoted in Edward Cook, *Delane of The Times*, (London: Constable & Company Ltd., 1915), 269.

who were outspokenly against *The Times* and refused to work with it, most notably Lord John Russell, had largely unsuccessful tenures as Prime Minister.⁴¹

The Times' international news network made it into the premier newspaper of Europe. Therefore, it was read not just by British politicians but by foreign statesmen, as well. The French Prime Minister Francois Guizot had numerous squabbles with *The Times*.⁴² Tsar Nicholas I read of the British ultimatum prior to the Crimean War in *The Times* before it arrived from official British couriers.⁴³ During the Crimean War, Russian commander Michael Gortschakoff read *The Times*, sent to him by his cousin in Warsaw.⁴⁴ Even American statesmen had some access to *The Times*. Abraham Lincoln said, "*The Times* is one of the greatest powers in the world; in fact I don't know anything which has more power, except perhaps the Mississippi."⁴⁵ Ironically, *The Times* and many other wealthy Londoners tacitly supported the South during the American Civil War, even placing Lincoln "in the catalogue of monsters, wholesale assassins and butchers of their kind."⁴⁶ *The Times*' international recognition and prestige, as well as its domestic readership—both in volume and by high-profile individuals—were testaments to its power during the 19th-century.

Technological Advances in Printing

⁴¹ Bowman, 235.

⁴² Bowman, 177-178.

⁴³ Woods and Bishop, 65-66.

⁴⁴ Woods and Bishop, 82.

⁴⁵ Quoted in Bowman, 17.

⁴⁶ Quoted in Bowman, 236.

Improvements in railroads and lower costs allowed newspapers to extend from urban centers to rural areas of Britain during the 19th-century. The lower-middle class was beginning to read papers for the first time. Media innovations, along with improvements in printing and communication technology, allowed for an unprecedented rate and abundance of knowledge to be disseminated to the public.

The Times pioneered printing innovation. John Walter's experimentation with logographic printing set a precedent for experimenting with printing, which had been using methods largely unchanged for 500 years. As noted earlier, *The Times* was the first newspaper to use a steam printing press. This allowed for 40,000 copies to be printed in a single day.⁴⁷ By 1820, 2,000 sheets could be printed in an hour, printing both sides of a page simultaneously, compared to 250 sheets through the older methods. By 1828, 4,000 copies could be printed per hour.⁴⁸ In 1866, the Walter Press, a rotary web press for which *The Times* held the patent, revolutionized printing. The Walter Press was capable of producing 10,500 eight-page papers in an hour, allowing for expanded circulation.⁴⁹

Quicker printing meant longer issues. *The Times*, which for decades had been a mere four or eight pages, was able to print 16-page issues after 1855. Prior to that, newspapers, unwilling to cut back on advertisement space, often sacrificed aesthetics for words. Typeface became exceedingly small and columns were crammed onto a page in awkward configurations.⁵⁰ After 1861, the paper increased to at least 20

⁴⁷ Jones, 31-32.

⁴⁸ Woods and Bishop, 32.

⁴⁹ A. E. Musson, "Newspaper Printing in the Industrial Revolution," in *The Economic History Review*, vol. 10, no. 3 (1958), 415-417.

⁵⁰ Woods and Bishop, 91.

pages per issue.⁵¹ More space meant more editorials, cultural reviews, and advertisements. On June 21, 1861, *The Times* printed a 24-page issue, with 144 columns and 4,000 advertisements.⁵² In addition to printing technologies, which allowed for expanded circulation and coverage of events, *The Times* pioneered news techniques for international use by employing submarine communication cables and telegraphs, railway networks, and steamships, while establishing foreign news offices around the world.

In the 18th-century, newspapers relied on the British Post Office for foreign news. Papers were charged for information, which was translated by the Post Office. Not only was this method inefficient, it allowed the government to easily withhold or skew information. In 1792, after an argument with the Post Office, *The Times* established its own foreign offices in Paris and Brussels. Letters dispatched from Brussels on Saturday could reach *The Times*' office in London by Monday evening.⁵³ In 1845, *The Times* had a falling out with the French government and was prohibited from using French transportation to send mail or news. The Austrian government then made its mail services available to *The Times*, which sent news stories from Suez to London in just 11 days without going through Paris. Realizing that their stubbornness did not inhibit *The Times*, the French government allowed *The Times*' couriers through its borders once again.⁵⁴

The alarmingly new speed at which knowledge spread was a hallmark of the 19th-century. *The Times* was the first newspaper to employ war correspondents, send

⁵¹ Woods and Bishop, 117.

⁵² *The Times*:..., 25.

⁵³ Woods and Bishop, 13-14.

⁵⁴ Bowman, 177-179.

reports via electric telegraph (1844), and use a rotary press (1848). In 1840, it took a mere 22 hours for dispatches from Paris to reach London. Articles from Bombay sent on October 1, Singapore sent on August 13, and China sent on July 2, all reached London and were printed in the November 11, 1840 issue.⁵⁵ During the Crimean War, submarine cable linked Varna in Bulgaria to Balaklava on the Crimean Peninsula; this essentially linked London directly to the Crimea.⁵⁶ During the Indian Mutiny of 1857, *Times* correspondent William H. Russell sent articles via submarine cable from India, costing *The Times* over £5,000.⁵⁷ Unlike its smaller competitors, *The Times* had the financial resources and the willingness to pay for prime journalism.

This speed allowed *The Times* to break numerous international stories. Granted, none of them were possible without willing informants and ingenious reporters, but the revolution of communication technologies served as the impetus for some of *The Times*' most important scoops. In the February 28, 1854 edition, the lead article was about the ultimatum that the British government sent to Tsar Nicholas I preceding the Crimean War. The ultimatum, sent from London on February 27, reached the Czar via *The Times* before arriving through an official British courier.⁵⁸ *The Times* was also responsible for breaking stories on a secret agreement between France and Prussia to divide Belgium⁵⁹ and published a letter from the Tsar, sent in

⁵⁵ Woods and Bishop, 60.

⁵⁶ Wood and Bishop, 83.

⁵⁷ Bowman, 225.

⁵⁸ Woods and Bishop, 65-66.

⁵⁹ Bowman, 245.

January 1853, which contained a plan to partition the Ottoman Empire.⁶⁰ The latter caused a tremendous outrage from the government. Of course, *The Times* could not have done such things without the help of informants within the Foreign Office, willing to leak sensitive information. In that regard, Lord Aberdeen, a close friend of Delane, was responsible for numerous groundbreaking news reports.⁶¹

One of the most famous incidents of *The Times* breaking an international news story occurred after the Russo-Turkish War, with the signing of the Berlin Treaty in 1878. *The Times'* correspondent at the conference, Stephan de Blowitz, a flamboyant German journalist working out of the Paris office, was able to smuggle information concerning the treaty out of the conference. Blowitz's version of his story contains elements of espionage, secret identities, and clever ruses, which ended with him escaping from Berlin on a train with a copy of the unfinished treaty. Certainly, the network of European railway and telegraph lines, which connected London to other major European cities, aided Blowitz's clever antics. As a result, *The Times* was able to print 57 of the 64 clauses and a paraphrasing of the preamble to the Berlin Treaty on July 13, 1878, the day the treaty was signed.⁶²

Publishing secrets, relying on Foreign Office informants, and stealing documents raised ethical questions over journalistic practices. Lord Malmesbury was furious with Delane, writing, "How is it possible that any honourable man editing a public paper of such circulation as *The Times* can reconcile to his conscience the act

⁶⁰ Bowman, 13-14.

⁶¹ Bowman, 157.

⁶² Bowman, 278.

of having made public that which he must have known was intended to be a Cabinet secret?"⁶³ This caused Delane to write a fiery, somewhat uncharacteristic response:

We hold ourselves responsible, not to Lord Derby or the House of Lords, but to the people of England for the accuracy and fitness of that which we think proper to publish. . . . Lord Derby failed to make the honourable portion of the Press his ally. He will fail to make it his slave, for he cannot intimidate it, and although he passes for a proud man among his peers, he will meet with at least an equal amount of pride and independence in the ranks of those journals which he has idly attacked and unjustly accused.⁶⁴

The publishing of secret documents created a previously missing demand for increased governmental transparency. The practice of clandestine operations and backroom agreements was challenged when the public could readily learn about such agreements soon after they occurred.

War Correspondence and Mass Media

The Times' ability to cover international news was groundbreaking. Sending war correspondents to report from the front lines allowed papers to print information without relying on official governmental reports. In 1847, an article in *Punch* said,

A French journalist has two great chances. He may either become a Prime Minister or an inmate of a Government prison. . . . An English journalist. . . has one great chance. He writes for a number of years; he

⁶³ Bowman, 13.

⁶⁴ Quoted in Bowman, 14.

influences public opinion; he exposes swindles; analyses the most plausible schemes; gives warning of a panic, or restores confidence when most needed; and his great chance is, if he has extraordinary talent, perseverance, and industry—to remain unknown.⁶⁵

At that time, British papers printed articles anonymously. This caused a debate in the 1850s and 60s over the anonymity of writers, which relied on the authority and reputation of the paper rather than on individual reporters. Newspapers, and their supporters, argued that this “impersonality” was necessary for “the purity and independence of the Press.”⁶⁶ With so few famous writers, the identities of editors became well known. The editors had a public visibility that often reinforced the public’s response to a paper. Editors in London had a responsibility to keep foreign correspondents in line with editorial policy despite the reporters’ distance. In 1853, the correspondent in Istanbul was reprimanded and eventually replaced for being too “pro-Turk.”⁶⁷ While few people knew the name Henry Crabb Robinson, *The Times*’ first European correspondent, this trend began to change by the 1850s, when all of Britain would learn the name William Howard Russell.

Russell gained fame as a war correspondent during the Crimean War, bringing the realities of war home to Britain.⁶⁸ Russell was joined in the war by Thomas Chenery, a former Oxford Professor of Oriental Studies stationed in Istanbul; Laurence Oliphant, stationed with the Ottoman forces; and General Ferdinand Eber, a

⁶⁵ Quoted in Jones, 119.

⁶⁶ William Hargreaves, *Revelations from Printing-House Square: is the anonymous system a security for the purity and independence of the press? : a question for 'The Times' newspaper*, (London: Knowsley Pamphlet Collection, 1864), 10.

⁶⁷ *The Times*: ..., 20.

⁶⁸ Woods and Bishop, 84.

Hungarian exile stationed in Russia.⁶⁹ Yet, it was Russell who gained celebrity as a result of his war coverage. His gruesome battle reports became the basis for Alfred Lord Tennyson's poem, "The Charge of the Light Brigade." His coverage of British mismanagement of troops and terrible field hospital conditions caused an outrage in Britain, leading to Florence Nightingale's involvement in the war.⁷⁰

The Times was once again criticized, this time for printing some of Russell's articles that covered "changes in the dispositions of the troops, the effects of the enemy's fire, the condition of the troops, and the resources of the Allies. These details were as enlightening to the Russian generals as they were to our own people, and must have encouraged the enemy to prolong their resistance."⁷¹ On December 23, 1854. *The Times* wrote, "The noblest army ever sent from our shores has been sacrificed to the grossest mismanagement."⁷² The government was outraged, but the general readership, of all classes, tremendously endorsed *The Times*, as Russell became a household name. Aberdeen's coalition government was eventually forced to resign, and the military administration was reformed.⁷³

Russell continued as *The Times*' primary war correspondent, covering the Indian Mutiny in 1857. He then briefly covered the American Civil War before being recalled by Delane for being obviously pro-Union after the Battle of Bull Run. Despite this transgression, Russell went on to report on the Franco-Prussian War. However, by the 1870s, competitors had caught up, creating foreign offices and

⁶⁹ Cook, 73-75.

⁷⁰ *The Times*..., 21.

⁷¹ Bowman, 212.

⁷² Quoted Bowman, 206.

⁷³ Cook, 75-76.

sending correspondents to cover European wars. It is generally agreed that Russell, unable to keep up with his young competitors, was not the most successful correspondent from the war, an honor that was bestowed upon Archibald Forbes of *The Daily News*. Still, Russell reported a good deal of unique, frontline coverage, including discussions between France's Napoleon III and Kaiser Frederick III of Prussia.⁷⁴ While other newspapers were catching up in terms of foreign journalism, *The Times* still had the best access to political figures and network of informants. However, Russell was no longer the sole journalist reporting to the English-speaking world.

The Rise of the Penny Press and Newspaper Competition

Between 1665 and 1800, 88 papers were established in Britain, compared to the 492 papers established from 1855 to 1861.⁷⁵ The newspaper industry had become lucrative, and owning or managing a paper was perceived as a symbol of wealth and status. The repeal of the Stamp Duty was also a driving force behind the impressive rise in the number of newspapers in Britain. Suddenly, small papers were able to turn a profit despite having lower circulations and costs than their competitors. Granted, many of these papers stopped printing shortly after they began, but quite a few survived and became longstanding rivals to *The Times*. These penny presses, named for their low cost, appealed to the lower-middle class and represented a cheaper alternative to *The Times*.

⁷⁴ Bowman, 247-248.

⁷⁵ Jones, 23.

In 1815, the Stamp Duty went up to 4d, causing the price of *The Times* to be raised to 7d.⁷⁶ Liberals and Whigs saw the duty as a “tax on knowledge” and fought vigorously to repeal it. They also hoped that repealing the duty would hurt *The Times*, which they often accused of being a monopoly. In theory, cheaper papers with fewer resources would be able to compete with *The Times*. In 1836, the duty was reduced from 4d to 1d across the board, rather than weighting the duty for papers based on size. Thus, *The Times* reduced its price from 7d to 5d and lost no readership.⁷⁷

After 1855, there was a tremendous spike in competitors. Once again, there were cries of monopoly in regards to *The Times*. This led to the outright repeal of the Stamp Duty. The prior failure to hurt *The Times* through such a maneuver was ensured by creating a postal charge for delivering newspapers that was based on the paper’s weight. This was clearly created to target *The Times*, the heaviest paper. In 1861, the last of the duties were removed, causing a price drop from 4d to 3d and forging an alliance between Deane and the Liberal Prime Minister Palmerston.⁷⁸ However, the lack of a tax did help rivals outside of London, which created local papers.⁷⁹

The Daily Telegraph, an inexpensive London daily paper, started at a cost of 2d, which was eventually reduced to 1d. Its circulation went from 30,000 in 1857 to 141,000 in 1861, greatly more than the circulation of *The Times*. *The Daily News*, which employed Charles Dickens as its first editor, had some initial struggles, but its

⁷⁶ Woods and Bishop, 27.

⁷⁷ Woods and Bishop, 55.

⁷⁸ Woods and Bishop, 87-93.

⁷⁹ Bowman, 220-223.

circulation was up to 150,000 by the time of the Franco-Prussian War.⁸⁰ While these two newspapers had greater readership than *The Times*, *The Times*' circulation did not significantly suffer. The penny presses were not stealing readers, but rather luring into their own readership members of the lower-middle class, who for the first time could afford to purchase a daily newspaper. While their product may have been inferior from a journalistic standpoint, the penny presses had tremendous appeal. *The Times* was unwilling to lower its cost below 3d, hoping to maintain a high-quality product for the more educated population.⁸¹

Newspapers had rivalries since their inception. *The Times* and *The Morning Chronicle* often exchanged harsh word in the 18th-century, while the former was under the editorship of John Walter.⁸² Thus, reporters became masters of writing while on horseback in order to complete their articles more quickly, hoping to beat their rival journalists and break a story.⁸³ However, in the 1860s, the sheer number of new, cheaper papers was outstanding. As an institution, *The Times* remained prestigious, even if it was no longer the most-read daily paper. While the rise of penny presses can be seen as the beginning of *The Times*' decline, the esteemed paper was not eclipsed in influence until the 20th-century.

Concluding Thoughts

⁸⁰ Woods and Bishop, 90.

⁸¹ Jean O'Grady, "The Egyptian Correspondent of 'The Times,'" in *Victorian Periodicals Review*, vol. 27, no. 2 (Summer 1994), 145.

⁸² Bowman, 50.

⁸³ Woods and Bishop, 60.

It is important to remember that people began to see *The Times* as a national institution, and not only a commercial undertaking. Even as it began to lose circulation with the rise of new competitors, it was still regarded with a sort of reverence by many.⁸⁴ Its rise to prominence was based on innovation and ingenuity, being the first paper to use a steam press, open foreign offices, and employ war correspondents. Through these advancements, *The Times* helped to topple governments, brought new governments into power, and broke the news on some of the most pivotal events in 19th-century European history. By doing so, journalism was fundamentally changed; the government saw a need to work with, not against, the press. The new speed at which knowledge was disseminated not only shaped mass media, but also the public's reactions to it. The public became anxious when having to wait for information to be reported. These changes fostered a need for governmental transparency.

Some commentators, such as the diarist Charles Greville, were skeptical of *The Times*' true influence and ability to dictate public opinion. Greville wrote that *The Times* was "always struggling...to take the lead of public opinion and watching all its turns and shifts with perpetual anxiety, it is at once regarded as undoubted evidence of its direction and dreaded for the influence which its powerful writing and extensive sale have placed in its hand."⁸⁵ Today, historians generally recognize the power of the press, and in particular *The Times*, during the 19th-century. While *The Times* may not have always generated public opinion, it certainly set the agenda for what the public read. Oliver Woods and James Bishop argue that the Crimean War

⁸⁴ Woods and Bishop, 96.

⁸⁵ Woods and Bishop, 56-57.

was the one time “if there were ever a time that *The Times* reflected and not led public opinion.”⁸⁶ During the war, sales reached a new high, but it is unclear if that related to *The Times*’ following of the sensationalized public’s support for the war or if Russell’s groundbreaking reporting was the primary reason.

By the 1870s, *The Times* had new competition, but its prestige was still unrivaled. History has largely overlooked *The Times*’ coverage of the Bulgarian massacres. Perhaps this is due to its timing, occurring at the very end of Delane’s career, or to the fact that it was swiftly followed by the Russo-Turkish War. Another possibility is that, as *The Daily News* had broken the story, historians of *The Times* pay little attention to it. The importance of breaking a story is echoed in the case of the overlooked Franco-Prussian War in *The Times*’ histories, where the most successful war correspondent was *The Daily News*’ Archibald Forbes, not Russell.

The Times was outraged by the massacres but arguably indecisive about involvement in another war involving Russia or the Ottoman Empire. Delane saw Ottoman misrule and Russian aggression and was equally unsupportive of both. There was little middle ground between checking Russian encroachment without supporting Ottoman misrule.⁸⁷ Six years earlier, Delane wrote, “We must try to keep out of another war in support of the blessed old Turk.”⁸⁸ Like many non-interventionists of his day, Delane wanted internal reforms to fix the Ottoman Empire. *The Times*’ policy reflects Delane’s indecision, which can be seen as a common trend during this era in Britain. While Delane and *The Times*’ views of the

⁸⁶ Woods and Bishop, 65.

⁸⁷ Cook, 253.

⁸⁸ Quoted in Dasent, 276.

pending Russian-Ottoman conflict were uncertain, what can be stated with certainty is that, for more than a half-century, *The Times* created the possibility by which checks could be made on the government and foreign news could be expediently reported. Ultimately, this promoted the outrage of British public opinion that occurred in August and September 1876.

Chapter 3: Account of the April Uprising and the Bulgarian Atrocities

This account draws upon English-language sources, but it has attempted to incorporate the perspective of pro-Bulgarian scholarship on these events, such as Charles and Barbara Jelavich¹ and Rumen Daskalov, who provides a comprehensive historiographical background to the April Uprising.² What is clear from the secondary literature that draws upon Bulgarian-language sources is that Januarius MacGahan is nearly universally hailed as a national hero in Bulgaria.³ Recent scholarship has also attempted to show that the strategy of the Bulgarian insurgency was to invoke a brutal response from the Ottomans in order to garner international, humanitarian support for autonomy.⁴ This provocation thesis has been applied to the revolutionary actions of the Armenians, as well.⁵

Despite the limitations of the English-language sources, this account has attempted to provide a more objective narrative of the events of May to September 1876, taking into account both pro-Ottoman historians (McCarthy, Shaw, Millman) and anti-Ottoman ones (Harris, Temperley, Walker) and the collection of available English-language reports, primarily those by Walter Baring, Eugene Schuyler, Januarius MacGahan, and J. Hutton Dupuis. Here, MacGahan's and Schuyler's anti-

¹ Charles Jelavich and Barbara Jelavich, *A History of East Central Europe*, vol. VIII The Establishment of the Balkan National States, 1804-1920, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1977).

² Rumen Daskalov, *The Making of a Nation in the Balkans: Historiography of the Bulgarian Revival*, (New York: Central European University Press, 2004).

³ Dale Walker, *Januarius MacGahan: The Life and Campaigns of an American War Correspondent*, (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1988), 326.

⁴ Daskalov, 197.

⁵ Guenter Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres in Ottoman Turkey: A Disputed Genocide*, (Salt Lake City, Utah: University of Utah Press, 2005), 11-19.

Turkish testimony serve as a critical balance to the pro-Disraeli governmental reports of Baring and Dupuis. With these narratives serving as a foundation, the role *The Times* had in shaping British public and political opinion will become evident.

Leading up to the April Uprising⁶

The foundation and inspiration for the uprising in Bulgaria in May 1876 can be traced back directly to the insurgency that was fought in Bosnia and Herzegovina, beginning in 1875. At that time, revolutionary groups, united by Slavic nationalist ambitions, rebelled against the authority of the Ottoman Sultan. The immediate effect of the rebellion was to resurrect the “Eastern Question” for the British public. It would not be the end of the question. As Harold Temperley commented in the 1930s, “Indeed the echoes of the shots fired at Nevesinje that year, shots fired for Serbian freedom, lasted until an Austrian Archduke fell beneath a Bosnian’s bullet forty years later.”⁷

In October 1875, trouble was also brewing in Bulgaria, called the Danube Province by the Ottoman Government. The British ambassador in Istanbul, Henry Elliot, reported that the Muslim population had attacked Bulgarian Christians.⁸ Elliot

⁶ The events in May 1876 are known as the April Uprising in Bulgarian History, despite all the events occurring in May. By this time, Bulgaria had not adopted the Modern Gregorian Calendar. Thus, many British Foreign Office documents include both dates, but this account will use the accepted modern dates.

⁷ Harold Temperley, *The Bulgarian and Other Atrocities, 1875-8, in the light of historical criticism*, (London: H. Milford, 1931), 3.

⁸ “Doc. 128, Sir H. Elliot to the Earl of Deby, Oct. 27, 1875,” in *British Documents on Foreign Affairs—Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print, Part I, From the Mid-Nineteenth Century to the First World War*. (ed. David Gillard), Series B, The Near and Middle East, vol. 2, (Frederick, Md.: University Publications of America, Inc., 1984), 135. “Bulgarians” is more or less universally assumed to be

also wrote of the unjust taxation placed upon all Christian males.⁹ While there is clear evidence of Ottoman misrule and problems between Muslims and Christians, the events appeared isolated and received minimal attention from British officials or the British press.

In reality, efforts to incite revolution were well underway. It later became public knowledge in Britain that the Bulgarian Committee was founded 14 years prior to the uprising in 1876. It existed to stockpile weapons, educate the public, and instill Bulgarian nationalism. Walter Baring, the British investigator of the Bulgarian massacres, wrote, “I am positively assured, the Turkish Government was perfectly well aware of the presence of these men...they never made the smallest attempt to arrest them, or to counteract the effect of the revolutionary ideas they were instilling into the minds of the people.”¹⁰ On February 28, 1870, the Sultan issued a firman recognizing the autocephalous Bulgarian Church as a millet, a protected religious minority community, which further helped develop Bulgarian nationalism. Previously, the Bulgarian Church had been administered by the Greek Orthodox millet, which was dominated by ethnic Greeks. This firman was strongly supported by France, Russia, and Great Britain. The French hoped that the Bulgarian Church would unite with the Roman Catholic Church while Russia hoped its existence would instill pan-Slavism.¹¹ There is no question that the Church helped to foster nationalistic feelings, and priests became a major force in the revolution.

Christians. Bulgarian Muslims are often simply, and inaccurately, referred to as “Turks” or more infrequently as “Pomaks.”

⁹ “Doc. 133, The Rev. J Clarke to Vice-Consul Dupuis, Oct. 15, 1875,” 137-138.

¹⁰ “Doc. 451, Report by Mr. Baring on the Bulgarian Insurrection of 1876,” 332.

¹¹ Charles Eliot, *Turkey in Europe*. New ed. (London: E. Arnold, 1908), 258-259.

By March 1876, the Bulgarian Committee at Bucharest was set on starting an insurgency. In the spring, Bulgarian farmers buried their valuables in their fields and planted crops to conceal them. This was later used as evidence that knowledge of the coming insurrection was widespread, although many were convinced that it was more a testament to the lawlessness of the area.¹² On March 19, a group of 80 agitators met, setting the date for the rising as May 1, which was later postponed to May 13. Their strategy was simple: destroy railways, burn a number of towns and villages, seize government stores in Bazardjik, and force Bulgarians to join the cause by burning their villages.¹³ In the spring, the actions and rhetoric of the Bulgarian Committee compelled a young Bulgarian schoolmistress to sew a flag for the movement. The adopted flag depicted a lion with its paw menacingly laid upon a crescent moon.¹⁴ The flag also brandished the motto, "Liberty or Death."¹⁵ Unfortunately for the Bulgarians, the Ottomans accepted the second part of their ultimatum, as they were definitely unwilling to grant the first.

May: The April Uprising and Ottoman Repression

Fearing the Ottoman government had learned of their plans, the insurgents sprung into action on May 1, 1876, nearly two weeks early.¹⁶ The outbreak began in the towns of Avrat-Alan and Otlukeuy, and insurgents burned the Bulgarian village of

¹² J.A. MacGahan, *The Turkish Atrocities in Bulgaria*, (Geneva: Th.D. Dimitrov, 1966), 110.

¹³ "Doc. 451, Report by Mr. Baring on the Bulgarian Insurrection of 1876," 333.

¹⁴ MacGahan, 80.

¹⁵ David Harris, *Britain and the Bulgarian Horrors of 1876*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939), 23.

¹⁶ "Doc. 452, Report by Mr. Schuyler on the Bulgarian Atrocities, Aug. 10, 1876," 356.

Bellova.¹⁷ The group amassed a modest force, involving many schoolteachers and priests. Initially, two railway bridges were destroyed along with a telegraph line. A few Turkish officials from the local rural police, called zaptiehs, were killed.¹⁸ On May 2, people in the central Bulgarian towns of Koprivshitsa, Panagurishte, and Klisura raised the banner of revolution.¹⁹ Although initially there was evidence of planning and widespread support, later observers of the uprising believed the Bulgarian organizers to be inexperienced due to their strategy of fortifying and trying to defend a handful of villages against regular Ottoman troops, rather than employing more guerrilla tactics of sabotage against railways and attacking small garrisons of soldiers.²⁰

The initial panic amongst the Muslim community led to an initiative to raise a popular Muslim militia to put down the rebellion. Aziz Pasha, the Ottoman governor stationed in Philippopolis (modern-day Plovdiv), called for the enlistment of irregular troops, Bashi-Bazouks (literally translated as “head busters”), throughout the vilayet, often financed by local Muslim notables.²¹ Regular troops were in short supply in the region, most were stationed in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Fearing the uncontrollable Bashi-Bazouks, Bulgarians in Perushtitsa, a village three hours from Plovdiv, sent a village notable, Rangel Gitchof, to petition Aziz Pasha to send regular troops to

¹⁷ “Doc. 451, Report by Mr. Baring on the Bulgarian Insurrection of 1876,” 333.

¹⁸ R. Grant Barnwell, *The Russo-Turkish War: Comprising an Account of the Servian Insurrection, the Dreadful Massacre of Christians in Bulgaria and other Turkish Atrocities*, (Philadelphia: Keystone Publishing co., 1877), 394.

¹⁹ Justin McCarthy, *Death and Exile: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims, 1821-1922*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Darwin Press, 1995), 59.

²⁰ MacGahan, p. 82. However, this can perhaps be seen as evidence for the provocation theory that was noted earlier.

²¹ “Doc. 433, Vice-Consul Dupuis to the Earl of Derby, Aug. 7, 1876,” 313.

protect them. Aziz Pasha responded that troops could not be spared and Christians had to defend themselves. The third time that Gitchof tried to ask for help for his village he was arrested.²² Later that month, Aziz Pasha was removed from his position due to numerous complaints that he was too friendly with Bulgarian Christians.²³

On May 7, Klisura, a town of 600 houses, was the first to be destroyed by Bashi-Bazouks led by Tusun Bey. Batak and Perushtitsa were attacked on May 9 and 13, respectively, by troops under the command of Ahmet Agha of Burutina. Otlukeuy was attacked on May 12 by both regular and irregular troops.²⁴ The suppression of Batak was perhaps the most devastating. Ahmet Agha claimed that if the village surrendered, no one would be hurt. After giving up their arms, the villagers were slaughtered. Many sought refuge in the church, but the door was eventually broken down. Baring described the churchyard as a “valley of the shadow of death.”²⁵ Perushtitsa was also brutally attacked. After the initial assault by the Bashi-Bazouks, hundreds of Bulgarians sought refuge in the town’s church. Bashi-Bazouks continued to pillage the town for three days while Ahmet Agha convinced Rashid Pasha, a commander of the Ottoman’s regular troops, to bring Ottoman artillery to end the siege of the church. During this time, the Bulgarian survivors escaped to another local church. The Ottoman regulars shelled them before offering them a chance to surrender. Survivors were unwilling to surrender to the Bashi-

²² L.P. Brockett, *The Cross and the Crescent; or, Russia, Turkey, and the Countries Adjacent, in 1876-7*, (Philadelphia: Hubbard Bros., 1877), 371.

²³ MacGahan, 118-126.

²⁴ “Doc. 433, Vice-Consul Dupuis to the Earl of Derby, Aug. 7, 1876,” 314.

²⁵ “Doc. 451, Report by Mr. Baring on the Bulgarian Insurrection of 1876,” 343-344.

Bazouks, knowing their reputation for cruelty. There were a few instances of men killing their families in the church in order to prevent the irregulars from violating them. Finally, Rashid Pasha accepted the surrender of the town, and survivors evacuated the church.²⁶

Regular troops were not above making an example of insurgents. In the village of Boyack, 166 men, eight women, and 12 children of about 1,300 villagers were killed by Ottoman regulars.²⁷ Generally, however, the regular army was far more reliable. Hassan Pasha, an Ottoman commander, stopped Bashi-Bazouks from plundering the village of Bratzigovo, but Mehmet Ali Bey of Bazardjik returned to finish the destruction of the village after the regular troops had moved on.²⁸ The town of Avrat-Alan, one of the initial sites of revolt, was attacked by both regular troops and Bashi-Bazouks. Survivors told a story that, “an old man was violated on the altar, and afterwards burnt alive.” Others mentioned that “pregnant women were ripped open, and the unborn babes carried triumphantly on the points of bayonets and sabers” and “old men had their eyes torn out and their limbs cut off, and were thus left to die.”²⁹ This repression was brutal but no more shocking than that experienced by other villages.

Survivors relayed tales of brutalities committed by Bashi-Bazouks, particularly involving the rape of Bulgarian women and young girls. It was recounted that “as many [Bashi-Bazouks] as cared would violate her, and the last man would

²⁶ “Doc. 451, Report by Mr. Baring on the Bulgarian Insurrection of 1876,” 358-359.

²⁷ McCarthy, 61.

²⁸ “Doc. 451, Report by Mr. Baring on the Bulgarian Insurrection of 1876,” 334.

²⁹ “Doc. 452, Report by Mr. Schuyler on the Bulgarian Atrocities, Aug. 10,” 1876, 359.

kill her or not as the humour took him.”³⁰ In the most devastated towns, such as Otlukeuy, “hardly a woman in the town escaped violation and brutal treatment.”³¹ The stories of these massacres resonated strongly with the British public, and the reports regarding rapes caused the greatest outrage.

The nearest British official to the carnage, Vice-Consul J. Hutton Dupuis, was stationed in Adrianople (modern-day Edirne), about 75 miles from Plovdiv, a center of the insurgency.³² Dupuis and Elliot had become aware of the insurrection by May 4, as Elliot telegraphed to Lord Derby, “An insurrectionary movement is reported among Bulgarians near Philippopoli, beyond Adrianople.”³³ Although from his location, even Dupuis had little idea of the extent of the insurgency. On May 6, he reported of insurgents “led by Servians” and that “it does not appear that the Turks are committing any acts of violence against peaceful Christians.”³⁴ On May 9, Elliot reported, “The organizers of the movement pursue the same atrocious policy as was followed in the Herzegovina, by burning and ravaging all villages, whether Mussulman or Christian, if the inhabitants refuse to join them.” This account discussed the outrages committed on Muslims and worried about acts of retaliation.³⁵ However, Elliot’s reports back to London greatly underestimated the severity of the situation.

³⁰ MacGahan, 52.

³¹ “Doc. 452, Report by Mr. Schuyler on the Bulgarian Atrocities, Aug. 10, 1876,” 359.

³² Richard Millman, “The Bulgarian Massacres Reconsidered,” in *The Slavonic and Eastern European Review*, vol. 58, no. 2 (April 1980), 218.

³³ “Doc. 231, Sir H. Elliot to the Earl of Derby, May 4, 1876,” 191.

³⁴ “Doc. 244, Vice-Consul Dupuis to Sir H. Elliot, May 6, 1876,” 198.

³⁵ “Doc. 243, Sir H. Elliot to the Earl of Derby, May 9, 1876,” 197.

Within a week of the outbreak, news had reached Istanbul and Elliot noticed that the city was restless and on the verge of a riot.³⁶ Dupuis's report to Elliot, which was sent to Lord Derby in London, discussed the "enrolment and equipment of Bashi-Bazouks" but also the "horrible cruelties to the small Turkish guard...hacked to pieces by Bulgarians" in the village of Bellova.³⁷ Elliot's suspicions of the Russians led him to believe they were responsible for instigating the uprising, and he encouraged the Ottoman government to put down the revolt as quickly as possible.³⁸

However, by May 24, Elliot had accepted the fact of Muslim violence against Christians, reporting of "the evils resulting from the employment of Bashi-Bazouks."³⁹ There were rumors in Istanbul and Edirne that the government had issued instructions "to decimate the Bulgarians, and to kill every male child under six years of age, in order to exterminate the race and compel the rest to emigrate."⁴⁰ As late as May 30, Bulgarians were still being massacred.⁴¹

Following the suppression of the uprising, many of the main perpetrators were decorated or promoted by the Ottoman government. Ahmet Agha, destroyer of Batak, was promoted to the rank of Yuzbashi (captain). Ahmet Agha of Tamrysh was awarded a silver medal. Tusun Bey was decorated⁴² for his actions in Klisura,

³⁶ "Doc. 241, Sir H. Elliot to the Earl of Derby, May 7, 1876," 196.

³⁷ "Doc. 283, Vice-Consul Dupuis to Sir H. Elliot, May 12, 1876," 216-217.

³⁸ Harris, 26-27.

³⁹ "Doc. 314, Sir H. Elliot to the Earl of Derby, May 24, 1876," 232.

⁴⁰ "Doc. 316, Vice-Consul Dupuis to Sir H. Elliot, May 19, 1876," 234.

⁴¹ "Doc. 451, Report by Mr. Baring on the Bulgarian Insurrection of 1876," 347.

⁴² "Doc. 452, Report by Mr. Schuyler on the Bulgarian Atrocities, Aug. 10, 1876," 359-360.

although he did not receive the rank of Mudir (district governor), as it was earlier reported in the British press.⁴³ Shevket Pasha was also decorated.⁴⁴

The government's hand in ordering, or at least allowing, atrocities to occur cannot be clearly proven. However, its inaction to suppress irregular troops or defend Christians, while decorating known culprits of atrocities, led to an explosion of British public opinion against the Ottomans. The British government, for its part, was castigated for not being forthcoming with information. Certainly this can partially be perceived as the fault of Benjamin Disraeli, the Conservative Prime Minister, and Lord Derby, the Foreign Secretary. Henry Elliot has also historically shouldered blame for being overly suspicious of Russia when there was no evidence of Russian or Serbian involvement in the insurrection,⁴⁵ encouraging the Sultan to suppress the uprising, and failing to pass on information adequately and expediently. Lord Derby only began to learn officially of the accurate chronology of events on August 22, when the report arrived from Elliot. Still, exact figures for the death toll or extent of cruelty were not known. The problem of ascertaining a true count of the casualties will be discussed later in this chapter.

June: British Awakening to the Events of May

On June 8, Elliot reported that “the Bulgarian insurrection appears to be unquestionably put down, although, I regret to say, with cruelty, and, in some places, with brutality.” The use of Bashi-Bazouks had “led to the atrocities which were to be

⁴³ “Doc. 451, Report by Mr. Baring on the Bulgarian Insurrection of 1876,” 341.

⁴⁴ “Doc. 397, Consul Reade to Sir H. Elliot, July 19, 1876,” 281.

⁴⁵ MacGahan, 78.

expected.”⁴⁶ Perhaps this expectation accounted for Elliot’s disinterest and lack of reports on the massacres in May. However, even prior to this statement, the British press had already begun to hear about the extent of the atrocities. *The Spectator* was the first to briefly report the incident, on June 3, although it would not be until June 23, when *The Daily News* printed the report of Edward Pears, its correspondent in Istanbul, that the British public became agitated over Bulgaria.⁴⁷

Prior to Pears’ article, the British government formed a vague ad hoc policy on the atrocities based on the fact that some brutality was “to be expected.”⁴⁸ Elliot was concerned first and foremost with putting down the insurgency, then investigating rumors of women and children being sold into slavery, which he asked Dupuis to report on.⁴⁹ Initial casualty estimates varied tremendously, depending on the source. Although it was established that about 100 villages were involved, the Turks claimed there were 18,000 deaths, while the Bulgarians pushed the number to 30,000.⁵⁰ One of Elliot’s informants remarked, “It was a great loss to the country, as most of them were tax-paying people.”⁵¹ The loss of revenue and problems this presented for the Ottoman economy was a recurring theme in the British reports.

George Washburn and Albert Long, American missionaries from Robert College in Istanbul, drew up a report on the rumors of massacre and gave it to Elliot, as well as the correspondent in Istanbul of *The Times*, Antonio Gallenga, and Pears.

⁴⁶ “Doc. 336, Sir H. Elliot to the Earl of Derby, June 8, 1876,” 247.

⁴⁷ Temperley, 11.

⁴⁸ “Doc. 336, Sir H. Elliot to the Earl of Derby, June 8, 1876,” 247.

⁴⁹ “Doc. 372, The Earl of Derby to Sir H. Elliot, July 13, 1876,” 269.

⁵⁰ “Doc. 359, Extract from the “Daily News” of June 23, 1876. The Assassinations at Constantinople. —Muslim Atrocities in Bulgaria., June 16, 1876,” 264.

⁵¹ “Doc. 357, Inclosure in Doc. 355,” 262.

Pears' articles published on June 8 and 30 also contributed to the excitement of the British public, but it was his June 23rd article, beginning, "Dark rumors have been whispered about Constantinople during the last month of horrible atrocities committed in Bulgaria," that would grip the public's imagination.⁵²

The article in *The Daily News* had such great impact that Disraeli was immediately required to answer questions on the atrocities in Parliament. Lord Derby even sent the article to Elliot on June 28.⁵³ Still, Lord Derby publicly denounced the exaggerations of atrocities, claiming, "It was not a case of lambs and wolves but of some savage races fighting in a peculiarly savage manner."⁵⁴ Meanwhile, Pears' accusation that Bashi-Bazouks were "armed by [the Ottoman] Government, with full permission to kill, violate, and rob"⁵⁵ gained attention.

There appeared to be much concern and speculation, however, none of these individuals had yet gone to Bulgaria to confirm the reports.⁵⁶ Russian and Greek agents were sent to investigate claims of atrocities by the end of June.⁵⁷ The official Ottoman report, submitted by Edib Effendi, caused a tremendous stir for its blatant suppression of facts.⁵⁸ Unsatisfied by any foreign report, Lord Derby demanded that Elliot send an official to investigate the situation. Simultaneously, the American consul also prepared to dispatch an investigatory committee. The Englishman Walter Baring and the American Eugene Schuyler, joined by *The Daily News'* war

⁵² "Doc. 359, Extract from the "Daily News" of June 23, 1876," 263.

⁵³ "Doc. 359. Extract from the "Daily News" of June 23, 1876," 263.

⁵⁴ Quoted in Harris, 55. From *The Times*, July 15, 1876

⁵⁵ "Doc. 359, Extract from the "Daily News" of June 23, 1876," 265.

⁵⁶ Millman, 220.

⁵⁷ Temperley, *The Bulgarian and Other Atrocities, 1875-8*, 15.

⁵⁸ Harris, 140-141.

correspondent Januarius MacGahan, became the most authoritative English-speaking observers of the aftermath in Bulgaria.

July & August: British and US Investigations

The aftermath of the massacres left the countryside lawless, with numerous roaming bands of robbers.⁵⁹ During the summer, Montenegro and Serbia went to war with the Ottoman Empire, which temporarily distracted both the Ottoman and British governments.⁶⁰ Meanwhile, the British press still reported on largely unverified accounts in Bulgaria, eagerly awaiting the reports of Baring and Schuyler. During the Crimean War, Lord John Russell said, “There had been a thorough awakening as to the advantages of copious telegraphy in war correspondence.”⁶¹ This was, to an even greater extent, the case in 1876. The British public had become accustomed to learning quickly of worldwide events and was chomping at the bit to get information, which was limited or restricted by unsubstantiated accounts, lack of governmental information, and the delay of pending official reports.

By July, the Foreign Office and Elliot’s doubts regarding the reality of incidents of outrageous torture and atrocities began to wane. On July 14, Lord Derby ordered Dupuis to personally investigate.⁶² A week later, Dupuis reported fewer than 15,000 deaths, with 60 villages destroyed, and no one sold into slavery.⁶³ Baring left Istanbul and arrived in Edirne on July 19, making his first report to Elliot on July 22,

⁵⁹ “Doc. 449, Vice-Consul Brophy to Sir H. Elliot, Aug. 18, 1876,” 330.

⁶⁰ McCarthy, 62.

⁶¹ Walker, 200.

⁶² “Doc. 376, The Earl of Derby to Vice-Consul Dupuis, July 14, 1876,” 272.

⁶³ “Doc. 387, Vice-Consul Dupuis to the Earl of Derby, July 21, 1876,” 276.

when he discussed exaggerations and estimated that 12,000 Bulgarians and 500 Muslims had perished. He further estimated that 60 villages were destroyed, of which 10 fell to insurgents. Perhaps one of the most shocking observations Baring made related to the overwhelming number of Bulgarians being tried for wrongdoing, while only two Bashi-Bazouks had been hung for their crimes.⁶⁴

Baring then set out for Plovdiv. Schuyler left on the July 23, one day after Baring, accompanied by the reporter MacGahan.⁶⁵ MacGahan had worked for *The New York Herald* and *The Daily News* during the Franco-Prussian War and the Paris Commune. However, *The Herald* was unwilling to pay for the trip. MacGahan approached *The Times* looking for employment to cover Bulgaria but was denied because “of his reputation for sensational proclivities.”⁶⁶ *The Daily News* eventually rehired him. While Schuyler and Baring had to prepare reports meticulously, MacGahan was free to send home articles to London as they traveled through the Bulgarian countryside. MacGahan also had a free hand to criticize the way the British government had handled the situation, as well as its reticence. At the end of July, MacGahan wrote, “the English government should know less of what is passing in Turkey than other Governments, and far less than well-informed newspapers.”⁶⁷

On August 1, MacGahan recounted stories of Ottoman tax collectors coming to devastated villages demanding payment “just as though nothing had happened.”⁶⁸

No livestock had been returned, making harvesting crops or rebuilding homes

⁶⁴ “Doc. 402, Mr. Baring to Sir H. Elliot, July 22, 1876,” 294-295.

⁶⁵ Harris, 150.

⁶⁶ Walker, 170.

⁶⁷ MacGahan, 14.

⁶⁸ MacGahan, 32.

impossible. The next day, both MacGahan and Schuyler traveled to Batak, where they witnessed the aftermath of the most brutal of all the massacres. MacGahan retold tales of

Women stripped naked, and in the presence of each other submitted to every species of degradation and infamy that the foul and debased imagination of a savage could invent. Nay, more. A simple savage, with all the untamed ferocity of a savage state, still keeps within the bounds of Nature.⁶⁹

Gruesome tales of rape served as interludes between accounts of piled skulls severed from skeletons, unburied bodies being picked at by wild dogs, and the misery of survivors. These were the results of “unbridled lust of a barbarous race.”⁷⁰ The tales of atrocities were now being reported from Bulgaria, undermining the British government’s claim that they were merely unsubstantiated rumors.

The American reporter certainly had no love for Muslims or Turks. His ethnic prejudices are clear, as is his flawed understanding of Islam. In one article, he enlightens his British readership with the explanation,

When a Mahometan has killed a certain number of infidels, he is sure of Paradise, no matter what his sins may be. Mahomet probably intended that only armed men should count, but the ordinary Mussulman takes the precept in broader acceptance, and counts women and children as well.⁷¹

⁶⁹ MacGahan, 150.

⁷⁰ MacGahan, 150.

⁷¹ MacGahan, 54.

His articles walked the line between gruesome details and tongue-in-cheek disgust with the Ottoman and British governments for their handling of the situation. The British Foreign Office took exceptional interest in the rumors of carts of heads being paraded around Plovdiv. This story was especially appalling and had struck a chord with the British media.⁷² Elliot asked Baring to report specifically on the stories that had been given immense attention in the press. Baring reported that he could not find evidence to these claims, concluding that they were morbidly exaggerated tales.⁷³ MacGahan responded to the British governmental interest to such horror stories by writing, "It strikes me as somewhat immaterial whether the heads were carted through the streets or not, once you admit, as Mr. Baring does, that the people who owned them had been killed."⁷⁴ MacGahan not only reported the brutality but also assigned blame. His final article in August discussed what recommendations Schuyler should make to the commission. These included the hanging of prominent perpetrators such as Ahmet Agha, destroyer of Batak, Ahmet Agha, destroyer of Perustitza,⁷⁵ Shevket Pasha, and Tusun Bey; disarming the Muslim population; rebuilding villages; and paying indemnification for Bulgarian losses at the government's expense.⁷⁶

By August, thousands of Bulgarian prisoners were either released or tried, and a list of primary Muslim offenders, from both regular and irregular troops, was published.⁷⁷ Dupuis had returned to Edirne by August 7.⁷⁸ Schuyler's Report was

⁷² "Doc. 396, Sir H. Elliot to Consul Reade, July 15, 1876," 281.

⁷³ "Doc. 451, Report by Mr. Baring on the Bulgarian Insurrection of 1876," 335.

⁷⁴ MacGahan, 156.

⁷⁵ The second Ahmet Agha should not be confused with Ahmet Agha, commander of the irregulars at Batak.

⁷⁶ MacGahan, 182.

⁷⁷ "Doc. 451, Report by Mr. Baring on the Bulgarian Insurrection of 1876," 331-356.

written on August 10.⁷⁹ Meanwhile, the British press awaited Baring's version of the events. Baring returned to Istanbul on August 22, yet his report was not received by London until September 14.⁸⁰ Not only had the various reports confirmed the brutalities of May, but they also served to reinforce the growing British public opinion of Muslims and Turks, steeped in the images of "The Terrible Turk" and "The Lustful Turk." Schuyler wrote that, "The inhabitants of some villages were massacred after exhibitions of the most ferocious cruelty, and the violation not only of women and girls, but even of persons of the other sex."⁸¹ Schuyler's depictions may not have been as specific or severe as MacGahan's, but he certainly agreed with the European stereotype of the Turk as the "other," and therefore a threat to European morality and sensibility.

Criticism of the British and US investigations

It is imperative to study the criticisms of the Baring and Schuyler commissions when trying to compile an objective account of the Bulgarian atrocities, since most scholarship largely relies on their works. From the start, Baring's appointment was criticized. He was perceived, like Elliot, to be a Turcophile. Furthermore, his father-in-law, Frederick Guaraccino, a Levantine (a Roman Catholic subject of the Ottoman Empire) who was notoriously known for being pro-Turk, accompanied him. Neither man spoke Bulgarian and they were heavily criticized for

⁷⁸ Millman, 225.

⁷⁹ "Doc. 452, Report by Mr. Schuyler on the Bulgarian Atrocities, Aug. 10, 1876," 356.

⁸⁰ Millman, 226.

⁸¹ "Doc. 452, Report by Mr. Schuyler on the Bulgarian Atrocities, Aug. 10, 1876," 357.

traveling with Turkish officials as guards.⁸² At one point, Tusun Bey even joined Baring's retinue.⁸³ MacGahan in *The Daily News* raised some of these facts as criticisms against Baring. Baring responded to these attacks, vouching that his Turkish companions were usually limited to only two zaptiehs.⁸⁴ It is also interesting that Baring's initial estimate of 12,000 deaths, stated on July 22, before he left Plovdiv, was also the number that he used in his final report, issued in September.

Many British Liberals, including Gladstone, felt that the American commission would naturally be more impartial because "America has neither alliances with Turkey, nor grudges against her, nor purposes to gain by her destruction."⁸⁵ However, America's lack of political interest in the region hardly made Schuyler and MacGahan completely objective. Both were Russophiles and relied almost solely on Christian witnesses. Baring said, "Mr. Schuyler made no attempt to conceal his violent antipathy for everything Turkish, and openly expressed the hope that the Ottoman Empire would shortly fall to pieces." Furthermore, the Americans were traveling with Prince Tseretelev, a Russian diplomat, which immediately caused Muslims to distrust them.⁸⁶ Musurus Pasha, the Turkish ambassador in London, felt that MacGahan, employed by the pro-Gladstone *Daily News*, would undoubtedly skew Schuyler's results.⁸⁷

⁸² Temperley, *The Bulgarian and Other Atrocities, 1875-8*, 20-21.

⁸³ "Doc. 457, Mr. Baring to Sir H. Elliot, Sept. 5, 1876," 375.

⁸⁴ "Doc. 457, Mr. Baring to Sir H. Elliot, Sept. 5, 1876," 375.

⁸⁵ W.E. Gladstone, *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*, (London: John Murray, 1876), 33.

⁸⁶ "Doc. 456, Mr. Baring to Sir H. Elliot, Sept. 5, 1876," 374.

⁸⁷ McCarthy, 94.

Neither commission was without their faults. Perhaps an even more glaring concern, other than their personal sentiments towards the Ottoman Empire, relates to their collection of statistical data. Of the 63 villages on which Schuyler provided information, he only personally visited 11. Similarly, Baring gave statistics for 51 villages, of which he visited 10.⁸⁸ While they certainly had a large enough sample and first-hand observations to speak to the devastating cruelties of the Bulgarian atrocities, attempting to establish a precise death toll was not possible.

The Magnitude of Atrocities

There is considerable debate over the number of Bulgarians killed in May 1876; estimates range from under 1,400 to over 200,000. The official Ottoman report, prepared by Edib Effendi, concluded there were 1,386 killed, very few of them being women and children. Baring reached a number of 12,000, while Schuyler estimated 15,000. The Bulgarian government came to accept a figure of 100,000.⁸⁹ By the end of August, newspapers throughout continental Europe were estimating between 35,000 and 40,000 Bulgarians killed, yet an official Belgian report stated that 4,000 or 5,000 was a more reasonable account.⁹⁰ A final report conducted by a railway engineer, referred to as Mr. Stoney, through a house-by-house inquiry after 1876, when the region was less tumultuous, decided upon 3,694. This could possibly be explained by the fact that many Bulgarians migrated to Romania and Hungary in

⁸⁸ Millman, 227-228.

⁸⁹ Temperley, *The Bulgarian and Other Atrocities, 1875-8*, 23.

⁹⁰ "Doc. 442, Mr. Lumley to the Earl of Derby, Aug. 25, 1876," 322.

the spring and summer, seeking agricultural employment.⁹¹ 20th-century historians have not settled on one single estimate, although many are willing to accept Baring or Schuyler's Reports. One notable exception, provided by historian Stanford Shaw, who has been accused of a pro-Turkish bias by Armenian historians, stated, "While no more than 4,000 Bulgarian Christians had been killed (and considerably more Muslims), the British press trumpeted the charge of 'Bulgarian horrors,' claiming that thousands of defenseless Christian villagers had been slaughtered by fanatical Muslims."⁹²

Part of the problem with these estimates is the total lack of accurate census data. The number of houses was used to determine the population of villages, with the common assumption that ten people resided in each. This is based on the Bulgarian cultural practice of married sons living with their parents. Edib Effendi reported that the population of Batak was 1,441 for 494 houses, while Baring pointed out that figure was unreasonably low. However, he also believed that Schuyler's approximation of 900 houses, meaning 9,000 inhabitants, was far too great.⁹³ According to Schuyler, of the 65 villages destroyed, Bulgarians were responsible for destroying only two or three.⁹⁴ Baring counted 58 villages destroyed, five of which were Muslim villages burned by insurgents and one of which had a mixed religious population.

⁹¹ Millman, 230.

⁹² Stanford Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, vol. 2, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976-7), 162.

⁹³ "Doc. 451, Report by Mr. Baring on the Bulgarian Insurrection of 1876," 337.

⁹⁴ "Doc. 452, Report by Mr. Schuyler on the Bulgarian Atrocities, Aug. 10, 1876," 358.

There is also debate over the number of Muslims killed that May. Historian Justin McCarthy used the estimate of 1,000⁹⁵ and stressed that, following the Russian invasion in 1877, hundreds of thousands of Muslims were killed, imprisoned, or turned into refugees, claiming that “atrocities against Turks were worse than those conducted during Bulgarian Horrors.”⁹⁶ The official reports submitted similar figures for the number of Muslims killed by Bulgarians. Schuyler believed that only 155 Muslims had been killed, only 12 of which were women or children. Schuyler also believed that “No Turkish women or children were killed in cold blood. No Mussulman women were violated. No Mussulmans were tortured. No purely Turkish village was attacked or burnt. No Mussulman’s house was pillaged. No Mosque was desecrated or destroyed.”⁹⁷ Baring counted 163 Muslims killed, agreeing that only 12 were women or children, some of whom were murdered in cold blood and that he saw at least one destroyed mosque.⁹⁸

Leading up to British Agitation and Final Thoughts on the April Uprising

Ultimately, the exact number that perished in the atrocities will never be known. The lack of accurate census data makes it impossible. What did become clear following the summer of 1876 was that the exact number did not matter. As MacGahan wrote, “For my own part, once the enormous number of 15,000 killed in four days is admitted, I do not care to inquire further... You cannot increase or

⁹⁵ McCarthy, 60.

⁹⁶ McCarthy, 92-94.

⁹⁷ “Doc. 452, Report by Mr. Schuyler on the Bulgarian Atrocities, Aug. 10, 1876,” 360.

⁹⁸ “Doc. 451, Report by Mr. Baring on the Bulgarian Insurrection of 1876,” 339.

diminish the horror of the thing by mere statements of round numbers.”⁹⁹ This was lost on the British government, and even more so on the Ottomans, yet it became extremely meaningful to the British public. As MacGahan stated, “The great crime in the eyes of Mr. Disraeli and Sir Henry Elliot was not to have killed many thousands of innocent people, but to have said there were 30,000 killed when there were only 25,000.”¹⁰⁰ The public was shocked and appalled by the descriptions of atrocities and, perhaps even more so, by the lack of punishment of the offenders. It did not matter if 5,000 or 50,000 people perished, which is partly why Edib Effendi’s blatantly falsified number of about 1,400 deaths was so offensive.

After the agitation, Gladstone wrote, “The heaviest question of all is not what was suffered in a given district at a given date, but what is the normal and habitual condition of eight or ten millions of the subject races, who for fifteen generations of men have been in servitude to the Turk.”¹⁰¹ In fact, that was to be the crux of the agitation movement. Similarly, Harold Temperley reflected over 50 years later that, “It is clear that it matters little if 3,000 or 10,000 were killed, if almost every ruffian guilty of the blood of children or women could evade all responsibility or penalty.”¹⁰²

Meanwhile, the British government had other concerns. Baring’s Report, reflective of these concerns, documented, somewhat strikingly, the loss of livestock in each village, what each village produced, and how much revenue it provided for the Ottoman government. The province in total provided about 800,000 Turkish pounds

⁹⁹ MacGahan, 18-20.

¹⁰⁰ MacGahan, 158.

¹⁰¹ W.E. Gladstone, *Lessons in Massacre; or, The Conduct of the Turkish Government in and about Bulgaria since May 1876*, (London: John Murray, 1877), 29.

¹⁰² Temperley, *The Bulgarian and Other Atrocities, 1875-8*, 24.

in tax revenues, making it quite lucrative.¹⁰³ The reporting of these facts demonstrates a clear concern for the Ottoman economy and stability, especially considering British economic involvement in the Ottoman state. There was a subtle call by the government to rebuild Bulgaria, but it must be questioned whether it was for humanitarian or simply economic reasons.

The role of the Ottoman government is also unclear, even though MacGahan felt that “these massacres were committed by the order of the authorities, and that is why the men who committed them have been rewarded with decorations and promotions.”¹⁰⁴ Despite rumors and the few occurrences of regular troops committing atrocities, the Ottoman government did not seem to order these brutalities. But the lack of punishment for the offenders became one of the greatest grievances of the British public. By the end of October, Lord Derby wrote to Elliot, “You cannot urge too strongly upon the Porte, in bringing to their notice Mr. Baring’s statements, the necessity of taking effective measures to afford redress, execute justice, and provide at once for the protection of the Christians.”¹⁰⁵

What is clear from this account is the lack of information the British government had, both being collected and transmitted by Elliot and Dupuis within the Ottoman State and being made public by Disraeli and the Foreign Office in London. Had *The Daily News* not broken the story, it is very likely that the “Bulgarian

¹⁰³ “Doc. 451, Report by Mr. Baring on the Bulgarian Insurrection of 1876,” 351.

¹⁰⁴ MacGahan, 90.

¹⁰⁵ “Doc. 262, The Earl of Derby to Sir H. Elliot, Oct. 24, 1876,” in *British Documents on Foreign Affairs—Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print, Part I, From the Mid-Nineteenth Century to the First World War*. (ed. David Gillard), Series B, The Near and Middle East, vol. 3, (Frederick, Md.: University Publications of America, Inc., 1984), 86.

Horrors” would have passed into the annals of history as a mere blip in the Foreign Office documents. Since the Crimean War, the British public had become accustomed to receiving vast quantities of information at a tremendous speed. The lack of information, which was revealed slowly, was an infuriating change. MacGahan’s ability to have articles printed well before the official reports, which were in need of comprehensive and tedious statistical preparation, also helped to incite the public. There was no authoritative official voice to counterbalance his gruesome depictions and anti-Ottoman polemic. The press’ ability to create knowledge expediently, coupled by the silence of the government, incited the public. In fact, the silence of the government allowed strong suspicions to grow.¹⁰⁶ As the government slowly moved to investigate unsubstantiated, but overwhelmingly widespread, rumors of Turkish atrocities, the press attacked the Ottomans as anti-Christian brutes incapable of reform and unworthy of British support.

¹⁰⁶ Harris, 94.

Chapter 4: *The Times* and the British Public Reaction

The Daily News and *The Times*: Competitors and Champions for the Agitation

The correspondence of Pears and MacGahan from June to August 1876 certainly placed *The Daily News* at the forefront of the British public's reaction. Gladstone even wrote to the paper on September 1, before publishing his pamphlet, *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*, "In the matter of the Bulgarian outrages, you have led the people of England: and I am about to walk as best I can in your steps, by an immediate publication, in which I shall hope to pay the *Daily News* a just acknowledgement."¹ In contrast, historians of *The Times* have downplayed or overlooked its reporting of the Bulgarian atrocities and its subsequent role in the agitation. Rather, they have chosen to focus on the Crimean War, where *The Times* had a more prominent role in breaking news. Still, the influence of *The Times* on public opinion should not be understated.

The British government most definitely recognized this influential role. A report reached Lord Derby in the Foreign Office in June 1876 that stated that abroad "The Times is regarded as at once the oracle of Her Majesty's Government, and the exponent of the intelligent opinion of Great Britain; and its accredited correspondent...may speak with an authority, and be listened to with a deference, which no other journalist, whatever be his nationality, could command."² It is quite

¹ R.T. Shannon, *Gladstone and the Bulgarian Atrocities 1876*, (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1963), 108.

² "Doc. 365, Mr. Monson to the Earl of Derby, June 23, 1876," in *British Documents on Foreign Affairs—Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print, Part I, From the Mid-Nineteenth Century to the First World War*. (ed. David Gillard), Series B, The Near and Middle East, vol. 2, (Frederick, Md.: University Publications of America, Inc., 1984), 267.

obvious that the British government acknowledged the impact of *The Times* and was sensitive to this influence throughout the summer and autumn of 1876.

There was a general notion that London journalism did not reflect the values and opinions of the population at large, but only that of the upper crust of British society, a group that was more inclined to “side with masters against servants, with governors against subjects, with wealth against poverty, with the *status quo* in all things against change in which it finds no personal profit.”³ However, the Bulgarian agitation was truly a mass movement, not limited to the elites, like the public demonstrations during the Greek War of Independence. There was a relief that the voices of the masses were being heard because of the popular opinion that if “the *Times* and the *Daily News* are on one side, there is more than enough to counterbalance the rest of daily journalism.”⁴

While *The Times* and *The Daily News* were on the same side of the agitation, they were also competitors, and both companies were trying to sell papers. This competition, especially once Bulgaria became one of the hottest topics in Britain, led the papers to dedicate significant space to events in Bulgaria. During these months, *The Times* printed letters from Gladstone, Disraeli, and Musurus Pasha, the Ottoman ambassador in London. Antonio Gallenga, *The Times*' correspondent in Istanbul, wrote, “A newspaper correspondent has a perfect right, which no one called in

³ John Boyd Kinneer, *The Mind of England on the Eastern Question*, (London: Chapman and Hall, 1877), 4.

⁴ Kinneer, 5.

question, to comment freely on every public act of the Embassy.”⁵ This became the policy of *The Times*; nothing was off limits.

Gallenga saw the government’s continuous denials and claims of sensationalism, exaggeration, and even fabrication of the atrocities as an insult and an attack against journalism. He wrote, “Diplomacy did thus throw a gauntlet to journalism which the Press was in duty bound to take up.”⁶ The stage was set for a tremendous public outpouring that was orchestrated by the British press. The government certainly recognized *The Times* as an influential medium but, in Gallenga’s eyes, challenged print media as an authoritative voice. The rift between government and media was further fueled by inter-paper competition and was therefore extremely effective in getting attention drawn to the situation in Bulgaria.

The Roles and Editorial Positions of Less Prominent British Publications

Before getting into a deeper inspection of *The Times* during these months, it is important to review the editorial opinions and general outlook being put forth by other publications: Conservative, Catholic, and newspapers outside of London.

The Conservative press, led by such publications as *John Bull*, *The Pall Mall Gazette*, *The Globe*, *The Standard*, and *Vanity Fair*, struggled to define their policies. These journals tended to avoid the subject of Bulgaria altogether in July.⁷ However, in early August, the conservative weekly *John Bull* was the first to abandon its

⁵ Antonio Gallenga, *Two Years of the Eastern Question*, vol. 2, (London: Samuel Tinsley, 1877), 167.

⁶ Gallenga, 149.

⁷ David Harris, *Britain and the Bulgarian Horrors of 1876*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939), 150.

support for Disraeli's government. MacGahan's articles in *The Daily News* similarly affected *The Globe*.⁸

The Daily Telegraph, a more moderate paper that tended to be conservative regarding the "Eastern Question" out of consideration for the strategic value of India,⁹ remained suspiciously quiet regarding Bulgaria in August. However, after Schuyler's Report, it was difficult for conservative papers to deny the severity of the atrocities, and they all generally shifted against the Ottoman Empire.¹⁰ *The Pall Mall Gazette* and the *Daily Telegraph* both attempted to present the Conservative Party's spin on the generally Liberal agitation.¹¹ Many assigned blame to Elliot rather than focusing on Disraeli and the entirety of the government for its carelessness towards human suffering.¹² That conservative papers moved in this direction is indicative of how strong the mass movement was during the summer of 1876, as their editorial stances underwent tremendous revisions after a period of silence.

The Catholic press also provides interesting insight. During the 1860s, Catholics had lost enthusiasm for the Liberal Party but were generally unwilling to support the Conservatives, who had a long tradition of anti-Catholicism.¹³ The Vatican sympathized with the Ottomans, partly because of the brutal repression of Polish Catholics by Russia in 1863. The problem in Rome was seen as Turks versus Russians and, as Cardinal Franchi said, "The Vatican 'hated and detested the Turks

⁸ Harris, 183-184.

⁹ Harris, 77.

¹⁰ Harris, 219.

¹¹ Harris, 227.

¹² Harris, 185-188.

¹³ John P. Rossi, "Catholic Opinion on the Eastern Question, 1876-1878," in *Church History*, vol. 51, no. 1 (March, 1982), 54.

for all their abominations,' the question was one of a choice of evils, Turkey or Russia. In this case the lesser evil was Turkey."¹⁴ The Catholic press, led by *The Weekly Registrar and Catholic Standard* of London, almost universally took a pro-Turkish line.

The parallels between the Turkish mistreatment of Slavs and the English mistreatment of the Irish were not lost on these Catholic journals, which only served to complicate their relationship further during the agitation. Catholics were generally unsympathetic of Gladstone, who rose to prominence within the agitation. W.G. Ward of *Dublin Review* wrote, "A little more sack cloth and ashes would, in truth, be becoming when Mr. Gladstone next expostulates with foreign nations on the score of humanity towards insurgents." *The Examiner and Northern Star* of Belfast opined, "Now that [Gladstone] had become a Home Ruler for Bosnia, Bulgaria, and Herzegovina who knows but that he may end by seeing self-government is also good for Ireland."¹⁵

The 1860s witnessed a tremendous boom in the number of newspapers, particularly those outside of London. *The Manchester Guardian* was quick to criticize the government, beginning on June 24, just one day after Pears' article appeared in *The Daily News*. W.T. Stead of *The Northern Echo*, based in Darlington, also became involved in the agitation at an early date.¹⁶ Stead went so far as to ascribe the agitation to the direct intervention of God.¹⁷ These northern papers jumped into the agitation movement with much less hesitation than most of the

¹⁴ Rossi, 62.

¹⁵ Rossi, 58.

¹⁶ Shannon, 39-49.

¹⁷ Shannon, 14.

Liberal press in London, including *The Times*, which was reluctant to print the same report that Pears submitted on June 23. The Liberal press in London more or less followed the lead of *The Times*, with the exception of *The Daily News* and *The Spectator*, which stuck to the anti-government rhetoric of the agitation until the end.¹⁸

The Times: Leader and Propeller of the Agitation

Initial Reports from Istanbul

Information about the Bulgarian uprising began to reach *The Times*' correspondent, Antonio Gallenga, in Istanbul by the end of May. On May 26, an article appeared in *The Times*, the content of which made it clear that Gallenga was unaware of, or perhaps did not believe, reports of the atrocities. However, his tone became more serious by June 1, when he wrote, "To leave Turkey to deal with the revolted Province at her own discretion, and free from foreign intervention, is to allow her to pacify by entirely destroying them."¹⁹ The severity of Turkish repression and the recklessness of its irregular troops were historically well known; therefore, Gallenga suggested caution and active foreign involvement in monitoring the situation.

A week later, Gallenga reported that the Ottomans were moving troops "to quell the rising in Bulgaria."²⁰ On June 8, he observed that, "British merchants going to their work from their country seats are, greatly to their surprise, saluted by Pashas." The deployment of the British Mediterranean fleet to Besika Bay reminded the

¹⁸ Harris, 384.

¹⁹ *The Times*, June 1, p. 7, col., 1-2.

²⁰ *The Times*, June 7, p. 5, col., 1-2.

Ottomans of “the bright days of 1854,” evidence of a renewed alliance dating back to the Crimean War.²¹ This later became a damning piece of evidence against the government, that the fleet at Besika Bay had encouraged massacres under the auspices of strong British support for the Ottoman Empire, regardless of atrocities.

During June, British newspapers were more concerned with the war between Serbia and the Ottoman Empire, allowing the Bulgarian insurrection to fall by the wayside. When the subject of the “Eastern Question” was introduced in Parliament by Lord Hartington, the leader of the Liberals in the House of Commons, the Conservative leadership in Parliament responded that it was “not ripe for discussion just now.” *The Times* reported that “Lord Hartington was of opinion that there should not be much more delay in imparting information on Eastern affairs.”²² Even before the full extent of atrocities had become known, the public and Liberal opposition had begun to doubt the silence of the government concerning the Ottoman Empire.

The Parliamentary report, critical of the government’s silence, appeared on the same day as Pears’ account of the events. After the initial report, information on the atrocities slowly trickled into the pages of *The Times*. Their Parisian correspondent told of “fresh atrocities committed in Bulgaria by the commander of the Bashi-Bazouks. These atrocities are not even known by the Ottoman Government on account of the isolation of the country.”²³ Reports from Vienna also told of “acts of extermination such as have never in our century been paralleled.”²⁴ The early reports occasionally commented on the selling of children into slavery and the rape of

²¹ *The Times*, June 8, p. 10, col., 2-3.

²² *The Times*, June 23, p. 9, col., 1.

²³ *The Times*, June 27, p. 5, col., 1-2.

²⁴ *The Times*, July 5, p. 5, col., 1-4.

women, but still generally avoided criticizing the British government for mishandling the situation.

July 8 to August 7: Editorial Wavering and the Nascent Agitation

By early July, the growing agitation in Britain in response to the atrocities included a number of prominent newspapers, clergymen, and intellectuals, although *The Times* still had not given its unbridled support. An article by Gallenga, based on the same information given to Pears that was printed on June 23 in *The Daily News*, appeared in the July 8th edition of *The Times*. Gallenga did not hesitate in assigning culpability directly to the Ottoman government, which had “probably not ordered any general massacre of unarmed villagers, but it is directly responsible for these outrages, because it has known of them and made no effort to stop them.”²⁵ In his assessment, Gallenga presumed that at least 100 Bulgarian villages were destroyed, 25,000 unarmed people were murdered in cold blood, 1,000 children had been sold as slaves, and countless women raped. Furthermore, 10,000 Bulgarians remained in prison and were undergoing torture. This report was sure to get attention.

On July 10, Disraeli commented on the rumors of the Ottoman government imprisoning 10,000 Bulgarians. *The Times* quoted him,

I cannot doubt that atrocities have been committed in Bulgaria, but that girls were sold into slavery or that more than 10,000 persons have been imprisoned I doubt. In fact I doubt whether there is prison accommodation for so many, or that torture has been practised on a

²⁵ *The Times*, July 8, p. 12, col., 1-2.

great scale among an historical people who seldom, I believe, resorted to torture, but generally terminate their connexion with culprits in a more expeditious manner. (Laughter.)²⁶

The perceived callousness and insensitivity of these remarks would be levied against the government and its support of the Ottomans for the duration of the agitation. The decision to include “(Laughter.)” following Disraeli’s remark only served to reinforce the perception that the government was acting callously. MacGahan even heard this quote in Bulgaria while observing the aftermath of the atrocities at Batak, writing, “Mr. Disraeli was right. At the time he made that very witty remark, these young girls had been lying there many days.”²⁷

The Spectator highlighted these comments, editorializing, “We do not scruple to say that it is a national calamity,—almost a national disgrace,—to have a Prime Minister who treats such evidence in such a way.”²⁸ The paper even suggested intervention if the atrocities were not ended immediately. *The Times* continued to refer to the quote into September, mentioning “the excessive imprudence of the tone and language of the prime minister” as he mocked the Bulgarian sufferings. The article concluded that the “misplaced frivolity has cost the Government dear.”²⁹ Disraeli went so far as to write a response in *The Times* months after the initial statement had been made: “I never used such an expression as ‘an historical

²⁶ *The Times*, July 11, p. 6, col., 1-6.

²⁷ J.A. MacGahan, *The Turkish Atrocities in Bulgaria*, (Geneva: Th.D. Dimitrov, 1966), 66.

²⁸ Harris, 105.

²⁹ *The Times*, September 6, p. 7, col., 1.

people,'...or ever sought to raise a laugh at the more primitive and speedy methods used by such peoples to get rid of their enemies."³⁰

Throughout July, more extensive reports of the events in Bulgaria appeared in the pages of *The Times* as its editorial staff slowly became more critical of the government's assurance that accounts of atrocities had been largely exaggerated. On July 22, *The Times* reported, "Further atrocities in Bulgaria are reported unanimously by all the foreign Consuls at Philippopolis...which no British Agent had been sent hitherto."³¹ Still, Disraeli remained steadfast in his presumption that the atrocities were just "coffee-house babble,"³² another quote that was continuously repeated, in the months that followed, to refute the government's charges against the media of exaggeration and fabrication.

There are a number of reasons why *The Times* had not actively begun to support the agitation during July. For one, prominent Liberal leaders remained uncommitted. Lord Hartington and Lord Granville, the Liberal leader in the House of Lords, remained unsympathetic to the movement throughout the entirety of the agitation. Like many, they could not imagine the Turks being removed from Europe, were unwilling to give Russia an opportunity to advance in Europe, and were not convinced that anti-Turkish sentiments were greater than anti-Russian feelings.³³ The possibility that the Liberal statesmen might be required to form a new government at a moment's notice also hindered their outspoken commitment. As Historian Harold Temperley observed,

³⁰ *The Times*, September 7, p. 9, col., 7.

³¹ *The Times*, July 22, p. 7, col., 1-4.

³² *The Times*, August 1, p. 6, col. 1-6.

³³ Shannon, 124.

Hartington, the Liberal leader in the Commons, dined with the Turkish Minister in London; Granville, the Liberal leader in the Lords, wrote to Elliot sympathizing with him on account of the attacks made on him. After all, the leaders of the opposition might be in office soon, and they were not, as yet, prepared to abandon these old formulas and break off diplomatic relations with the Turks even if there *had* been terrible massacres.³⁴

Gladstone had formerly retired from Liberal leadership in 1875 and had not yet become the champion for the Bulgarian cause.³⁵ A speech he delivered on July 31 condemned the nature of the government's Eastern policy but only vaguely mentioned Bulgaria.³⁶

The beginning of August brought about a shift in the reporting of the Bulgarian events, primarily because newspaper correspondents were finally visiting the scenes, providing eyewitness testimony of what had occurred. "One cannot pass over the passages which the author says, 'I have seen.'"³⁷ *The Times* was still hesitant about printing overly exaggerated accounts but, as one correspondent put it, "If only a small part of the story of these massacres, pillagings, hangings, burnings, drownings, and ravishings is true, it is enough to make people, in the name of humanity, insist on an end being put to such proceedings."³⁸ On August 2, an

³⁴ Harold Temperley, *The Bulgarian and Other Atrocities, 1875-8, in the light of historical criticism*, (London: H. Milford, 1931), 26.

³⁵ Harris, 244.

³⁶ Shannon, 50.

³⁷ *The Times*, August 1, p. 5, col., 2-3.

³⁸ *The Times*, August 1, p. 5, col., 2-3.

editorial appeared declaring that “the testimony has been too various, derived from too many sources, and yet too consistent, not to be true.”³⁹

Editorials continued the following week, criticizing the British government’s lack of realism and level of concern and the Ottoman government’s lack of justice. The report of Edib Effendi, the Ottoman Commissioner to Bulgaria given the task of investigating the insurrection, became public in early August. *The Times* saw his report as “a defence of the Turks against the cruelties they are charged with having committed. He denies the atrocities alleged, and makes counter charges of barbarity upon the other side.”⁴⁰ The report exculpated the Ottoman government, blaming Bulgarian rebels for the entirety of their plight. With regards to allegations that Bulgarian women were massacred, Edib Effendi purports, “The Bulgarians, in their obstinate resistance, happened to be at certain points accompanied by their families. Thus, some women were hurt during the combat.”⁴¹ *The Times* editorialized, “The Porte is lamentably mistaken if it supposes that the opinion of Europe will be influenced by so vague and evasive a Report as that of Edib Effendi.”⁴² Edib Effendi’s Report, coupled with a rising tide of public activism and the arrival of initial reports from MacGahan in Bulgaria, confirmed *The Times* in its position at the forefront of the agitation. It stopped being the quiet disapprover of the Turks and sympathizer with the Bulgarians and became the roaring critic of the British government’s inaction and its foreign policy concerning the Ottoman state.

³⁹ *The Times*, August 2, p. 9, col., 3-4.

⁴⁰ *The Times*, August 7, p. 9, col., 3-5.

⁴¹ *The Times*, August 7, p. 9, col., 3-5.

⁴² *The Times*, August, 7, p. 9, col., 3-5.

The Times as an Active Agitator

On August 10, *The Times* reported Disraeli saying that the Bulgarians were “sufferers of imaginary atrocities.” This was in sharp contrast to quotes in the paper from the Bishop of Manchester, who said MacGahan’s descriptions of Bulgaria could “make the blood freeze in the veins.” The Bishop even criticized Gladstone’s speech at the end of July for promoting the territorial integrity of Ottoman Europe. As the Bishop said, “I have no pretensions to be a statesman, and perhaps it will be better to keep the question of humanity distinctly clear of the question of political eventualities.”⁴³ *The Times* editorialized with similar sentiment concerning Christianity and humanitarianism, as well as the problematic British support for the Turks, writing, “The atrocities in Bulgaria form part of the price which must be paid for the aid of Moslem fanaticism.”⁴⁴

That day, the Parliamentary Blue Book concerning Bulgaria was published. The document was carefully edited with noticeable omissions, particularly those concerning the futility of Ottoman reform and those that justified support for the Ottomans.⁴⁵ The pro-Ottoman, anti-Bulgarian Blue Book helped to solidify *The Times*’ growing anti-Turkish policy. “A chief object in the selection of these Papers is to make it appear that the Bulgarians are primarily responsible for all that has happened, and that the deeds perpetrated by the Turkish troops, if not justifiable, were excusable, or at least inevitable.”⁴⁶ Apart from the pro-Ottoman slant and omissions,

⁴³ *The Times*, August 10, p.6, col., 1.

⁴⁴ *The Times*, August 10, p. 7, col., 3.

⁴⁵ Temperley, *The Bulgarian and Other Atrocities, 1875-8*, 30. For full details on the omissions, see Temperley’s appendix.

⁴⁶ *The Times*, August 11, p. 9, col., 2-3.

The Times took issue with the document's reliance on the correspondence of Henry Elliot and J. Hutton Dupuis, who initially showed a lack of interest in the atrocities. Even after MacGahan's articles, Elliot remained steadfast in his belief that "the story of the massacres is a fabrication for political purposes."⁴⁷

Just as Disraeli's perceived callousness hurt the government in July, Elliot's similar insensitivity served to heighten the agitation in August. It appeared that nothing could "convince Sir Henry Elliot that there has been anything beyond a little inevitable severity."⁴⁸ This coincided with the Liberal attack, which claimed that the Government became aware of the gravity of events only via newspapers. Liberal Parliament members argued, "The Government and the country were very much indebted to the newspaper Correspondents, through whom these events had become known."⁴⁹ Disraeli vehemently denied these charges.⁵⁰ During these weeks in August, *The Times* published lengthy articles, on the average of every other day, often over 6,000 words in length, about public meetings held in protest to the outrages, but also detailing the Parliamentary debate.

By mid-August, the names Ahmet Agha and Shevket Pasha had become well known in Britain. *The Times*, like many, castigated the Ottoman government for decorating them, editorializing with an indictment of Ottoman justice.⁵¹ On August 18, it claimed, "Europe has seen nothing like this since the time of Genghis Khan."⁵² *The Times* was satisfied to see some reaction from the Ottoman government. In order

⁴⁷ *The Times*, August 11, p. 9, col., 2-3.

⁴⁸ *The Times*, August 11, p. 9, col., 2-3.

⁴⁹ *The Times*, August 12, p. 6, col., 1-6.

⁵⁰ *The Times*, August 12, p. 6, col., 1-6.

⁵¹ *The Times*, August 16, p. 6, col., 1-4.

⁵² *The Times*, August 18, p. 5, col., 2-3.

to avoid further massacres, irregular troops were prevented from entering captured Serbian towns.⁵³ Still, these small changes did little to alleviate British negative perceptions of the Ottomans.

Between June and September, hundreds of public meetings were held to protest the Bulgarian massacres. Many of these meetings passed resolutions that thanked the *The Times* for bringing information regarding the massacres to light. The Mayor of Plymouth said, “The newspaper Press of the country, and in particular, *The Daily News* and *The Times* deserve the best thanks of the nation for their exposure of the atrocious deeds of the Turkish troops.”⁵⁴ Many meetings also passed resolutions against the conduct of the British government or at least demanded the recall of Elliot. *The Times* did not “desire or even suggest the recall of Sir Henry Elliot,”⁵⁵ but that did not stop the paper from levying numerous complaints against his performance. Elliot did not “scrutinize too closely the conduct of Irregulars whose character was notorious,” concluding, “it is impossible to resist the conclusion that he did not form a sound and accurate judgment upon the evidence of these Bulgarian atrocities.”⁵⁶

The public was also growing restless with the government’s reticence on the atrocities. While Disraeli, Lord Derby, and Elliot provided vague answers about the exaggerations to the extent of atrocities, they refrained from commenting specifically on MacGahan’s articles or rumors of the estimates killed. Disraeli was still committed to the explanation that the “Bulgarian atrocities are a Russian trap to call

⁵³ *The Times*, August 18, p. 5, col., 2-3.

⁵⁴ *The Times*, September 7, p. 11, col., 1-3.

⁵⁵ *The Times*, August 30, p. 7, col., 1-2.

⁵⁶ *The Times*, August 30, p. 7, col., 1-2.

for the expulsion of the Turks from Europe.”⁵⁷ *The Times* too became suspicious of the government’s silence, writing, “We are still without Mr. Baring’s Report on the deeds done in Bulgaria...the telegraphic service between London and Constantinople is trustworthy and expeditious, and a comparatively brief message would suffice to say whether the statements which have been published of the atrocities committed in Bulgaria were substantially accurate.”⁵⁸ The delay in the publication of Baring’s Report only caused more suspicion towards a government that suffered from a questionable transparency. *The Times* continued, “We cannot think we shall be committing an error in assuming that some message has been transmitted and received.”⁵⁹

While *The Times* showed tact when dealing with Elliot, Disraeli, and the reticence of the government at large, on September 6, *The Times* once again railed against the government for propping up the Ottoman state; however, it also reminded the public that the British government should not be blamed for the atrocities.⁶⁰ The public was not so quick to make that distinction. At one meeting, Reverend John Strogan suggested that, if the government knew of the atrocities and thereby approved of them, as evident by their silence and sloppy Blue Books, “[Disraeli’s Cabinet] ought not only to be driven from their posts as Cabinet Ministers, but driven out of the country.”⁶¹ That meeting also called for protest against supporting the Turks in

⁵⁷ Temperley, *The Bulgarian and Other Atrocities, 1875-8*, 12.

⁵⁸ *The Times*, August 30, p. 7, col., 1-2.

⁵⁹ *The Times* August 30, p. 7, col., 1-2.

⁶⁰ *The Times*, September 6, p. 8, col., 4-6.

⁶¹ *The Times*, September 6, p. 8, col., 4-6. R.T. Shannon’s *Gladstone and the Bulgarian Agitation 1876* excellently addresses the role of ministers and clergymen in the agitation. The importance of authoritative Christian voices in the movement helps

the future, as well as for securing independence for all the Slavic peoples. The government was accused of “pretending to believe in Turkish promises of reform, and pretending to disbelieve in the horrors of Turkish rule.”⁶² By the beginning of September, *The Times* was a leading voice in the agitation, opposing the government’s silence and willingness to support the Ottomans through its editorials, but also dedicating an extraordinary amount of space to reporting on public protest meetings throughout Britain.

September 6: Gladstone joins the Agitation

Harold Temperley believed that Gladstone’s motives for joining the agitation have been misjudged. His decision to leave the Liberal leadership position in 1875 was meant to be final, Gladstone having written, “I deeply desire an interval between Parliament and the grave.”⁶³ Temperley’s belief that Gladstone was inspired by the call for humanitarianism is in contrast to the view held by Disraeli and Conservatives. Upon hearing that Gladstone had published *Bulgarian Horrors and the Questions of the East*, Disraeli wrote, “This means that Gladstone will return to Liberal leadership and that he will use the agitation to overthrow me.”⁶⁴ Regardless of his motives, Gladstone’s publication and assumption of leadership of the agitation movement pitted two immensely popular rivals against each other once again.

demonstrate the importance of the Christianity of both the British and Bulgarians in spite of the Muslim Ottomans.

⁶² *The Times*, September 6, p. 8, col., 4-6.

⁶³ Temperley, *The Bulgarian and Other Atrocities, 1875-8*, 16.

⁶⁴ Temperley, *The Bulgarian and Other Atrocities, 1875-8*, 28.

On September 4, Gladstone and Delane attended a dinner party together, hosted by Lord Granville, where the topic of the agitation was discussed extensively. The next day, Gladstone wrote, "I had a long talk with Delane. We, he and I, are much of one mind in thinking the Turks must go out of Bulgaria, though retaining a titular supremacy if they like."⁶⁵ Gladstone went forth with publishing his pamphlet knowing that he had the support of *The Times*' influential editor. On September 6, the pamphlet was published, selling 40,000 copies in the first week and 200,000 in total. Commentators have pointed out that the pamphlet "contained no revelations" but succeeded by concentrating "into a single utterance a profoundly excited public mood struggling for articulation."⁶⁶ Some commentators went so far as to say, "The reaction to the 'Bulgarian Horrors' was nothing like that in Britain, the like of which had not been seen since the invention of movable—and moving—type."⁶⁷ While the pamphlet relied heavily on Schuyler's Report and the Parliamentary Papers on Turkey, the reporting of *The Times* was also extremely influential on the scope of Gladstone's project.

Gladstone began by mentioning the government's silence, writing, "For months the nation was content...to remain without official information, and to subsist upon the fragmentary and uncertain notices which would alone transpire through the press."⁶⁸ However, following the detailed reports of MacGahan, the lack of official

⁶⁵ Edward Cook, *Delane of "The Times,"* (London: Constable & Company Ltd, 1915), 256.

⁶⁶ Shannon, 109-110.

⁶⁷ James Franklin Clarke, *The Pen and the Sword: Studies in Bulgarian History*, (ed. Dennis Hupchick), (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 388.

⁶⁸ W.E. Gladstone, *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*, (London: John Murray, 1876), 7.

statement from Baring, and the continued agitation as reported by *The Times*, it is clear that the public was no longer willing to settle for silence. Gladstone continued to speculate on Baring's Report, believing, "When it comes, we shall receive it with confidence, and with profit, although we may be very sure that the Ottoman government will have done everything in its power to blind, and to baffle, and mislead him."⁶⁹

Before prescribing future policy concerning the Ottomans, Gladstone discussed a number of complaints raised by the agitation, as seen in the pages of *The Times* during the previous month. The first was the decision to move the Mediterranean Fleet to Besika Bay in order to protect British nationals as well as Ottoman Christians. As *The Times* reported, the Turks felt that the fleet reflected British support for them, therefore Gladstone believed that the fleet "encourages not coerces" the atrocious behavior of Turks.⁷⁰ Furthermore, the movement of the fleet served as proof that the Government "knew something was happening but they told no one."⁷¹ The popular negative reaction to Edib Effendi's Report was also mentioned. Gladstone argued that the lack of compassion and implications of a Bulgarian conspiracy in the document were disgraceful, unverified, and untrue.⁷² Finally, the reaction to the lack of justice and, furthermore, the decoration of a handful of named Bashi-Bazouk commanders were unsettling to Gladstone's notions of humanity.

⁶⁹ Gladstone, *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*, 32.

⁷⁰ Gladstone, *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*, 26.

⁷¹ Gladstone, *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*, 40.

⁷² Gladstone, *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*, 34-36.

Gladstone put forth three goals for the British government: to stop Ottoman misrule, to pressure the Ottoman government against outrages, and to redeem the British name.⁷³ To be clear, Gladstone was not calling explicitly for independence for Bulgarian, just autonomy. This becomes an important distinction between Gladstone's call for territorial integrity and Disraeli's rhetoric of upholding the *status quo*. Gladstone argued, "The public of this country, now I trust awakened from sloth to nobleness, may begin to fear lest the integrity of Turkey should mean immunity for her unbounded savagery, her unbridled and bestial lust."⁷⁴ Gladstone's pamphlet brought a new life to the agitation, and made him its leader.

Later that week, Gladstone delivered a speech in the rain, attended by more than 10,000 people, in which he lauded both *The Daily News* and *The Times*.⁷⁵ The speech was reprinted in the papers the following day. Although some commented that his speech purported more moderation than his pamphlet, it was indeed compelling.⁷⁶ In the days following September 6, newspapers and town meetings were dedicated to the work of Gladstone. As *The Times* reported,

Mr. Gladstone's pamphlet on the atrocities in Bulgaria, which was published yesterday, will not only swell the tempest of indignation against Turkey, but will provide the popular meetings with a series of practical demands for the purpose of freeing Bosnia, Herzegovina,

⁷³ Gladstone, *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*, 49.

⁷⁴ Gladstone, *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*, 53.

⁷⁵ *The Times*, September 11, p. 10, col., 1-6.

⁷⁶ Harris, 249-250.

and, above all, Bulgaria from the injustice and ferocity of Turkish rule.⁷⁷

Public meetings that followed drew attention to the delay of Baring's Report, expressed the suspicion that the government was withholding information, and displayed the juxtaposition of Christianity and humanitarianism.⁷⁸ Furthermore, there was a sentiment present in the meetings, supported by *The Times*, that "England had a right and a duty to speak out on behalf of the Christian subjects of the Porte."⁷⁹

Following publication of Gladstone's pamphlet, *The Times* became more polemical. The paper grew tired of the Cabinet's defense of the Ottomans and Elliot's handling of the situation, writing, "Lord Beaconsfield had stated that Sir Henry Elliot did keep the Government informed of [the atrocities]. If so, the Government were to blame for these dreadful outrages. He believed that the country was shocked at the inactivity both of the English Ministry and of our Ambassador at Constantinople."⁸⁰ The same day, Gladstone wrote a letter to *The Times*, published alongside extensive reports concerning his pamphlet and the reinvigorated agitation. In it, he stated, "At the meetings that have been held throughout the country there has been and is a demand for some vigorous act to redeem the past and give better homes of the future."⁸¹

⁷⁷ *The Times*, September 7, p. 10, col., 1-4.

⁷⁸ *The Times*, September 7, p. 11, col., 1-3.

⁷⁹ *The Times*, September 7, p. 11, col., 1-3.

⁸⁰ *The Times*, September 7, p. 11, col., 3-4. As of August 12, 1876, Disraeli was elevated to Peerage with the title "Earl of Beaconsfield." For the sake of continuity, this paper will continue to refer to him by his better-known name, Disraeli, than his title, Lord Beaconsfield. *The Times* reported on Disraeli's elevation on August 12, p. 9, col., 1-2.

⁸¹ *The Times*, September 7, p. 9, col., 1-2.

Reactions to Gladstone continued to fill *The Times* during the following week, which *The Times* dubbed “The universal outbreak of feeling at the atrocities.”⁸² One editorial showed its support for the movement and summarized Gladstone’s pamphlet, writing, “Mr. Gladstone’s language goes much further than a mere denunciation of the conduct of the Turks in Bulgaria and in the Insurgent Provinces. It amounts to an indictment of the whole of Turkish rule, from the beginning to the end, in Asia no less than in Europe. There is not a favourable line in the tremendous picture which he draws.”⁸³

While the *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East* and Gladstone’s speech had drummed up considerable support for the movement, the Conservatives were quick to respond. Lord Derby, known for being more quiet and cautious than his fellow ministers, delivered a speech calling for the necessity of Britain’s commitment to the Ottoman Empire. He said, “A responsible Minister cannot in ordinary circumstances be too cautious in committing himself to any approval of propositions for international change.”⁸⁴ In his opinion, and in the opinion of many Conservatives, the “Eastern Question’s” most pressing concern was who would control Istanbul. Regardless of the Bulgarian atrocities, Lord Derby was not prepared to solve the “Eastern Question” in the summer of 1876.

Lord Derby’s speech comforted people, particularly those who would have otherwise supported the government, but who were instead swept up in the media buzz created by *The Times* and *The Daily News*. Historian David Harris speculated,

⁸² *The Times*, September 8, p. 7, col., 1-2.

⁸³ *The Times*, September 8, p. 7, col., 2-3.

⁸⁴ *The Times*, September 12, p. 9, col., 1-2.

“The agitation could not have gone on in its full intensity much longer.”⁸⁵ Lord Derby’s speech alleviated some of the tension that had developed in the agitation. The public was further appeased when an order to arrest Ahmet Agha and Tusun Bey was issued by the Ottoman government.⁸⁶ This was perceived as just retribution and proof of the power exerted on the Ottoman state from the British public opinion, particularly the press.

Despite some relief for the British government provided by Lord Derby’s speech, the agitation continued on through September. On September 16, Gladstone once again wrote to *The Times* in order to readdress the grievances of the agitation, particularly the government’s willingness to prop up an Ottoman state, which he saw as guilty of misrule and mistreatment of Christian subjects. Gladstone continued to dwell on the lack of information and transparency of the British government, writing, “Nearly five months after the date of the outbreak, we still remain without any adequate statement of any portion of the facts from any responsible British authority.”⁸⁷

After Disraeli was elevated to Peerage on August 12, there was an election to fill his vacated seat from Buckinghamshire. Despite being heavily contested by the Liberals, Disraeli’s intense campaigning on behalf of the Conservative candidate, T.F. Freemantle, proved decisive. On September 22, it was announced that the Conservatives won the seat with 2,725 votes compared to the 2,539 votes for the

⁸⁵ Harris, 292.

⁸⁶ Harris, 293.

⁸⁷ *The Times*, September 16, p. 5, col., 1-2.

Liberal candidate, Mr. Carrington.⁸⁸ During the election campaigning, Disraeli continued to respond to the attacks by Gladstone and the agitation, saying, “The general havoc and ruin which [the agitation] may bring about, it may, I think, be fairly described as worse than any of those Bulgarian atrocities which now occupy attention.”⁸⁹ Disraeli further condemned the moderation exhibited by Gladstone during his speech of September 10 while attacking the rising humanitarian tide in the agitation, saying,

Mr. Gladstone wrote a pamphlet one day. (Much laughter.)... Well, two or three days afterwards, Mr. Gladstone on reflection—because humanitarian politicians do not always look before they leap (laughter)—feeling that he had made a mistake, in a magnanimous manner said he did not mean the expulsion of the Turkish nation, but only the expulsion of the Turkish Ministers.⁹⁰

As of September 23, *The Times* was still against the government, printing a letter from Rev. Monsure d. Conway who expounded the history and credentials of Eugene Schuyler.⁹¹ Despite printing letters that defended the official American investigator of the atrocities, *The Times*' editorial opinion was beginning to shift away from an entirely anti-Turkish stance.

⁸⁸ *The New York Times*, September 23, p. 5.

⁸⁹ *The Times*, September 21, p. 6, col., 1-3.

⁹⁰ *The Times*, September 21, p. 6, col., 1-3.

⁹¹ *The Times*, September 23, p. 9, col., 5.

Around this time, Delane fell ill and travelled to Dunrobin, Scotland to recover.⁹² Known for strict editorial control, he left the paper as the agitation was gaining tremendous popularity. During this time, the paper became swept up in the agitation and published some of its most anti-Turkish and pro-Russian articles. Witnessing the rising tide of the agitation and the growing polemical stance of his paper, Delane immediately returned to work. Shortly thereafter, the policy gradually began to shift back to a more supportive stance of the government in the beginning of October. Delane described this change in policy as “A retreat from a false position so skillful as scarcely to have been perceived until the movement was completed.”⁹³

The End of September and the Slow Abandonment of the Agitation

It was clear by the end of September that the agitation had begun to wind down. *The Times* actually “promised an end of its own opposition and that of the country if the government would merely show a willingness to attack the problem of Turkish misrule in any way that it thought advisable.”⁹⁴ *The Times* seemed to have decided that it was unwilling to demand the resignation of the Cabinet, therefore, there was nothing else the agitation could accomplish. The paper nonetheless opined, “The agitation has done good work in manifesting the change in the national view of the Eastern Question, and it is now time for Lord Beaconsfield and Lord Derby to show that they know how to turn the strength behind them to a useful purpose.”⁹⁵

⁹² Arthur Irwin Dasent, *John Thadeus Delane, Editor of “The Times:” His Life and Correspondence*, vol. 2, (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1908), 328.

⁹³ Dasent, 328.

⁹⁴ *The Times*, September 23, p. 7, col., 1-2.

⁹⁵ *The Times*, September 26, p. 7, col., 1-3.

One editorial even suggested a way for Turkish Ministers to acquit themselves of guilt by “admitting that they were utterly powerless to control the conduct of the forces at their command, and utterly unable to obtain information of that conduct, even when it was notorious to all Europe.”⁹⁶ While these glimmers of less polemical journalism began at the end of September, *The Times* had, in reality, not yet, not quite abandoned the cause of the agitation.

The backpedaling of *The Times*' editorial policy, however, became increasingly clear in early October. Perhaps the greatest charge against the British government, its reticence and insensitivity to Bulgarian suffering, was retroactively justified in the October 6th edition of *The Times*:

The agitation, even though it had meant a loss of impartiality, was most honorable to the country and it represented a gain to the cause of humanity that the English people should have so responded, but the movement had undoubtedly been guilty of excess when it was popularly supposed that the government had been indifferent to Bulgarian suffering.⁹⁷

This sentiment was similarly reflected in early September by Conservative papers such as *The Standard* and *The Pall Mall Gazette*.⁹⁸

In that same issue, *The Times* printed an apologetic letter from the Ottoman ambassador in London, Musurus Pasha, which expressed his deepest regret, stating, “I hope I shall be believed when I state that I have silently endured very great pain

⁹⁶ *The Times*, September 28, p. 7, col., 4-5.

⁹⁷ *The Times*, October 6, p. 7, col., 1-2.

⁹⁸ Harris, 362.

during the last few months from what I have read in the English newspapers.” Not only does this letter provide evidence that the anti-Turkish tide was giving way to a national mood of Russophobia, but also that the Ottoman government showed evidence that it had been tracking the agitation through British papers. This gives some credence to the argument that the arrests and trials of known Bashi-Bazouk commanders were brought about by pressure through the British press.⁹⁹

On October 7, *The Times* again stressed the sensationalism of the agitation, that it had been “obviously exaggerated so far as it assumed the indifference of our Government to these atrocities.” Furthermore, it highlighted the non-commitment of Liberal leaders such as Lord Granville and Lord Hartington, noting that the government’s “reserve in this respect has been exactly imitated by the more responsible leaders of the Liberal Party.”¹⁰⁰ This was a subtle critique against Gladstone, one of the Liberal’s least responsible leaders.

The Times continued to lambast Gladstone, which brought attention to his “effort to destroy all the moral influence of the Government the very moment when they need to be able to speak with the whole authority of England.”¹⁰¹ Clergymen, intellectuals, and statesmen who showed a similar irresponsibility by supporting the agitation were guilty of “urging the mass of the English people to repudiate and distrust the Government, and to demand at all costs one particular solution of this

⁹⁹ However, on October 18, *The Times* regrettably reported that Ahmet Aga “has been actually permitted, pending the inquiry, to retain such a position that the head of the Commission accepts his hospitality and lives under his roof.” In *The Times*, October 18, p. 6, col., 5-6.

¹⁰⁰ *The Times*, October 7, p. 7, col., 1-2.

¹⁰¹ *The Times*, October 10, p. 7, col., 1-2.

question.” They had no excuse for their actions.¹⁰² Conveniently, *The Times* failed to mention its own undermining of the government’s position in the previous months. *The Times* framed the recent history of the agitation as “a popular excitement which, however commendable in its original motives, is certainly accompanied by a grievous lack of capacity to appreciate the difficulties of the situation.”¹⁰³

Gladstone was understandably upset by *The Times*’ abandonment of the agitation and its personal attacks against him, especially considering his conversation with Delane during Granville’s dinner party, a mere two days before the publishing of *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*. In a personal letter, he wrote, “*The Times* appears to be thoroughly emasculated. It does not pay to read a paper which next week is sure to refute what it has demonstrated this week. It ought to be prohibited to change sides more than a certain number of times in a year.”¹⁰⁴ Gladstone’s feelings of betrayal may have been overstated, but what was clear was that he felt that the agitation would surely suffer with the loss of the endorsement of *The Times*, and it did. The agitation failed to deliver any meaningful or persuasive public meetings or speeches after *The Times* shifted its editorial position.

Delane’s revised stance on the Ottoman Empire and the impending conflict between the Ottomans and Russia was best expressed on October 19. *The Times* opined, “Neither Parliament nor the country would ever hear for a moment of our going to war on behalf of Turkey. She has had her opportunities—only too many; she has thrown them all away, and it would be criminal folly to expend the smallest

¹⁰² *The Times*, October 10, p. 7, col., 1-2.

¹⁰³ *The Times*, October 10, p. 7, col., 1-2.

¹⁰⁴ Harris, 364.

amount of English blood or treasure in her support.” This view was hardly adverse to the agitation movement, but *The Times* continued, “Lord Beaconsfield and Lord Derby by their uniform language have given a sufficient pledge against our being betrayed into such an error. They have told us again and again, consider English interests exclusively. That exclusiveness, if a little questionable previously, must now be maintained without qualification.”¹⁰⁵ Maintaining British interests and avoiding involvement in war became paramount, superseding outcries against Ottoman misrule, the British government’s reticence, and Britain’s unjustifiable support for the Turkish government.

Throughout the agitation, there had been a public clamor for an independent, autonomous Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Bulgaria. Disraeli argued against this, as he believed that the ethnic and religious complexity of the area made it too difficult to partition. Furthermore, Austria-Hungary was stubbornly unwilling to see the area as potential independent states.¹⁰⁶ Gladstone made a distinction between supporting territorial integrity and maintaining the *status quo*, but was unwilling to commit to independence for Bulgaria. By the end of September, *The Times* began to put forth an alternative to either continued Turkish misrule or Christian independence. Based on Baring’s Report, the paper became convinced that self-government was not the solution. Instead, it supported Provincial government administered by an outside authority.¹⁰⁷ *The Times* postulated, “The policy of displacing Turkish administration

¹⁰⁵ *The Times*, October 19, p. 9, col., 1-2.

¹⁰⁶ Harris, 327.

¹⁰⁷ *The Times*, September 20, p. 9, col., 1-2.

in any Province of Europe because it was brutal would have few supporters if the administration designed to succeed it was equally brutal.”¹⁰⁸

This was problematic because of Russia and Britain’s unwillingness to allow the other Power to occupy the region. By early October, *The Times* was again gripped by traditional anti-Russian feelings. Worried about Russian control of Bulgaria, *The Times* called for governmental decisiveness, writing, “If it be true that Russia proposes to occupy Bulgaria, and desires Austria to do the same by Bosnia and Herzegovina, it would appear that Her Majesty’s Government must at last shake off their indecision and make up their minds to do something.”¹⁰⁹ Their pages, formerly filled with attacks on the government and reports of public meetings that also attacked the government, were replaced with editorials that called for government support and strong anti-Russian opinions.

At the end of January 1877, *The Times* even suggested a desperate proposition of outside administration of Bulgaria under the watchful eye of decorated military hero Charles Gordon.¹¹⁰ *The Times* editorialized,

The Governor of Bulgaria should be a man not only determined to deal out inflexible justice to both the rival sects, but above the mere suspicion of favouring either. He must, therefore, be a foreigner. At the same time he ought to know Turkey, to be intimately acquainted

¹⁰⁸ *The Times*, November 1, p. 9, col., 2-3.

¹⁰⁹ *The Times*, October 6, p. 6, col., 1.

¹¹⁰ Commonly known as Gordon Pasha or Gordon of Khartoum, Gordon has been memorialized for his tragic death in Sudan in 1885.

with the religious susceptibilities of Mahomedan people, and to be practised in the government both of subject and dominant races.¹¹¹

The Times went on to list the popular hero's qualifications, including, "In China and Africa he has shown a power of dealing with nationalities of inferior race or civilisation rare even among Englishmen."¹¹²

Although the paper did not support the Ottomans, it clearly readjusted its stance regarding the sitting British government. In November, it continued to castigate the Ottoman government for not addressing the grievances of the Bulgarians, failing to pay reparations, or helping to rebuild the province.¹¹³ However, most editorials from mid-October to the end of the year were focused on the looming war between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, as well as concern for the need to avoid a Russian occupation of Bulgaria.¹¹⁴

Newspapers began to draw parallels between the current situation and the last Russo-Ottoman conflict that Britain was drawn into, the Crimean War. *The Times* remembered that, at the time of the Crimean War, "No one could point out the precise cause of the conflict—the precise incident in the absence of which Europe would have remained at peace;" they could only point out an "ungovernable impetus of feelings and events in one direction, and under it the nations seemed to have moved purposeless and spellbound into war."¹¹⁵ The European Powers agreed to a meeting

¹¹¹ *The Times*, January 29, p. 9, col., 2-3.

¹¹² *The Times*, January 29, p. 9, col., 2-3.

¹¹³ *The Times*, November 14, p. 7, col., 2-3.

¹¹⁴ *The Times*, October 16, p. 5, col., 1-4.

¹¹⁵ *The Times*, October 17, p. 7, col., 2-3.

at the Constantinople Conference¹¹⁶ in order to resolve the growing tensions between the Ottoman Empire and Russia and, to a lesser extent, to protect Christian Europe at large. Disraeli sent Lord Salisbury, a known Ottoman detractor, along with Elliot to the Conference to represent Britain. Disraeli and Lord Derby counted on the Russophobe Elliot to be the “ball and chain on the restless leg of Salisbury.”¹¹⁷

The Times was hopeful that “the Conference may help to show that the determination to free ourselves from all responsibility for the crimes of Turkey is not confined to what may be called the impulsive classes.”¹¹⁸ A traditional reaction to Russia’s plan to intervene in Bulgaria may have caused Britain to join in another Russian War but, as *The Times* reported, “The Conference is one of many signs that this country will not help the Turks to resist the only measures by which a just system of rule can be established in Bosnia and Bulgaria.”¹¹⁹

The British government did not provide Russia a green light to occupy Bulgaria, although *The Times* seemed troubled that “The [Ottoman] Ministers believe that, if Turkey should be attacked, she will be able to drag some Power to her assistance, and thus draw a new lease of life from another alliance.”¹²⁰ Unfortunately for the Ottomans, no Power was willing to be drawn into such an alliance, forcing the Sultanate to fight Russia alone in the Russo-Turkish War that began in April 1877.

¹¹⁶ The Constantinople Conference was also well known for Midhat Pasha’s announcement of an Ottoman Constitution that provided equal rights to Christian subjects. British representatives and the British public were not particularly appeased or convinced of the Constitution’s sincerity or projected longevity.

¹¹⁷ Shannon, 253.

¹¹⁸ *The Times*, December 9, p. 9, col., 2-3.

¹¹⁹ *The Times*, December 9, p. 9, col., 2-3.

¹²⁰ *The Times*, January 16, p. 9, col., 2-3.

Considering the Reversal of Editorial Policy

With the agitation winding down and anti-Russian sentiments rising to prominence, *The Times* balked. *The Spectator* and *The Daily News* continued their anti-Turkish and, more importantly, anti-Disraeli editorials. *The Times*, in its moderation, became visibly more anti-Russian, less anti-Turkish, and completely silent regarding any criticism of the British government. One potential explanation concerns Delane's health. Delane was known for strict editorial control of his paper and, during the time that the paper became swept up in the agitation he was ill, away from his desk in London. After returning to work, he began to shift the editorial policy of the paper to a less sensational and more supportive stance towards the government. Delane's return also coincided with the growing realization among the public that Great Britain might have to face another war between Russia and the Ottoman Empire. Delane could not justify, once again, going to war on the side of the Ottomans; but he likewise found the possibility of Russian dominance equally unacceptable.¹²¹ Delane disliked both the Ottomans and Russians, which explains how two separate articles expressing this view were printed in the October 11th edition of *The Times*. It was not completely contradictory to object to both sides of the conflict. Delane was also wary of both Gladstone and Disraeli, preferring to put his faith in Lord Derby and Lord Salisbury to resolve the crisis peacefully and reconcile British interests and Turkish oppression of European subjects.¹²²

It is important to note that, despite the rapid reversal of editorial policy, *The Times* never openly supported military intervention, nor did it propose supporting the

¹²¹ Dasent, 328-331.

¹²² Cook, 256.

Ottomans against the Russians. While Gladstone had been a member of Palmerston's cabinet that supported British involvement in the Crimean War more than 20 years earlier, the current situation was perceived quite differently.¹²³ Many Liberals, particularly Gladstone and the media, believed that the Ottomans, due to their inability to reform, were no longer worthy of guaranteed British support. The British lives sacrificed in the Crimean War turned out to be in vain, as the Ottomans were unchanged two decades later. The misstep of British support for the Sultan could not be made again. It seems clear that the strength of the agitation had affected the government in a way that no quick and half-hearted change in *The Times*' policy could undo. *The Times* and the agitation essentially tied the hands of the government. The British public found it unacceptable to consider intervening in any pending conflict on the side of the Ottoman state, no matter how much the Russians were detested.

¹²³ Harris, 132.

Conclusion

Period Between the Agitation Movement and Russo-Turkish War

From April 1877 to March 1878, the Russo-Turkish War occupied British journalism. The Treaty of San Stefano, signed on March 3, 1878, granted independence to Serbia, Romania, Montenegro, and autonomy to Bulgaria. The Berlin Treaty which revised the Treaty of San Stefano, made Bulgaria significantly smaller, returning full control of the Eastern provinces to the Ottomans.¹ Throughout the war, Europeans debated the future of Bulgaria. Many, including Gladstone, saw problems with outright independence that would certainly significantly increase Russian influence. Many proposed some level of autonomy from the Porte, however, Russia planned to occupy the area. For many, this was an outrage. Britain had a hard enough time allowing France to lead the brief, joint occupation of Syria in 1861, a Russian occupation of Bulgaria was far more unacceptable. Sir Edmund Hornby, vehemently argued that, Bulgaria's "government ought not to be left even for a month under Russian influence."² Even with the agitation over, the future of Bulgaria continued to be on people's minds.

While the war raged on in Eastern Europe, much of the British public remained satisfied with Britain's lack of involvement. Sir William Vernon Harcourt, a member of Parliament, spoke at Oxford in January 1878, saying, "The Turkish Empire has not been defended, because the English Government have resolved from the first that it should not be defended; and the English people have confirmed and

¹ M.E. Yapp, *The Making of the Modern Near East 1792-1923*, (New York: Longman Group, 1987), 79-80.

² Sir Edmund Hornby, *A Scheme for the Future Government of Bulgaria*, (London: Eastern Question Association, 1878), 2.

will confirm them in that resolution. (Cheers.)”³ Around this time, a leaflet was circulated entitled, *How the English Ambassador Provokes War*.⁴ Blame for Elliot on account of the agitation, British support for Ottoman misrule, and the Russo-Turkish War, was popular and persisted as late as the 1930s, supported by Harold Temperley’s history of the Bulgarian agitation.⁵

The majority of the information the public received came from the print media. The government’s silence caused grave suspicion regarding the severity of the atrocities and also concerning the government’s stance toward the Ottomans and Russians. This silence created a void in information that was filled, and perhaps oversaturated, by journalists. MacGahan’s ability to telegraph reports had a far greater impact on public sentiment than Schuyler’s and Baring’s statistical reports which were meticulously calculated, written, and subsequently delayed. Still, both *The Times* and Gladstone acknowledged that the official reports were vital. If nothing else, the government could no longer deny or claim exaggerations of information it had itself produced.

The Times was clearly instrumental in creating and sustaining support for the agitation movement, which quickly lost popularity once *The Times* abandoned the cause. Critics of the agitation placed blame on the press for the Russo-Turkish War, believing that Russia was encouraged to go to war since Britain was unlikely to

³ William Vernon Harcourt, *Speech by Sir William Vernon Harcourt, MP to his Constituents at Oxford, January the 9th, 1878*, (London: JB Nichols and Sons, 1878), 5.

⁴ *How the English Ambassador Provokes War*, leaflet no. XXII, (London: Eastern Question Association, 1878).

⁵ Harold Temperley, *The Bulgarian and Other Atrocities, 1875-8, in the Light of Historical Criticism*, (London: H. Milford, 1931).

intervene on behalf of the Ottomans in response to the strong tide of public opinion.⁶ Without question, *The Times* helped to undermine Disraeli and his Cabinet, often editorializing about his flippancy, which in turn allowed Disraeli's vacated Parliamentary seat to be closely contested by the Liberals. Although *The Times* and other British papers may not have been able to directly change policy, it was able to tie the government's hands in any efforts regarding future intervention by constantly criticizing the government and its Ottoman policy.

Gladstone: "Do It Again"

In March 1877, Gladstone published a second pamphlet on the Bulgarian atrocities, *Lessons in Massacre: Or the Conduct of the Turkish Government in and about Bulgaria*, a mere month before the outbreak of the Russo-Turkish War. Unlike his *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*, which sold 200,000 copies, *Lessons in Massacre* only sold 7,000.⁷ As war seemed increasingly more imminent, Bulgaria was pushed to the backburner. Furthermore, Gladstone lacked the support of the media's coverage, which also contributed to the popularity of his first pamphlet. Gladstone's general argument clearly condemned the Ottoman government. He wrote,

The acts of the Porte, through nine long months, demonstrate a deliberate intention, and a coherent plan. That purpose has been to cover up iniquity; to baffle inquiry' to reward prominence in crime; to

⁶ R.T. Shannon, *Gladstone and the Bulgarian Atrocities 1876*, (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1963), 266.

⁷ Gary Bass, *Freedom's Battle: The Origins of Humanitarian Intervention*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008), 294.

punish or discourage humanity among its own agents; to prolong the reign of terror; to impress with a steady coherency upon the minds of its Mahometan subjects this but too intelligible lesson for the next similar occasion, *do it again*.⁸

The attitude of “do it again” is common throughout his piece. Ultimately, by not condemning the Ottomans, Britain was setting itself up for another incident. This further supported the popular British opinion that the Turks could not be reformed.

Historian Charles Eliot saw this inability to reform as distinct and recurrent problem with the Ottoman government, writing,

The inconvenience of pressure may force the Porte to yield for a moment, but no feeling of shame or fear of repetition makes it careful to avoid similar incidents in the future. On the contrary, it appears to calculate, and with perfect justice, that the more thorny questions it can raise to occupy and embarrass the Powers, the offender it is likely to have its own way and be left alone.⁹

Conservatives also acknowledged this. Sir Henry Elliot wrote, “We have been upholding what we know to be a semi-civilized nation.”¹⁰ However, Conservatives were far more willing to look past these problems in favor of British interests.

Precise data proving the number of innocents who perished during the Bulgarian massacres will probably never be known, yet it is fair to assume that the

⁸ W.E. Gladstone, *Lessons in Massacre: Or the Conduct of the Turkish Government in and about Bulgaria*, (London: John Murray, 1877), 8.

⁹ Charles Eliot, *Turkey in Europe*. New ed. (London: E. Arnold, 1908), 415.

¹⁰ David Harris, *Britain and the Bulgarian Horrors of 1876*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939), 265-266.

numbers were truly awful, both by our contemporary, and by 19th-century, sensibilities. However, since the British public was aware of massacres within the borders of the Ottoman Empire throughout the century, perhaps there was a perception that brutality was the cost of doing business with the Ottomans. The Bulgarian agitation was a turning point; even Conservative papers were swept up in the movement, condemning the Sultanate. It seems as though there were numerous reasons for this sudden change in Eastern policy, many of which were intrinsically related to *The Times* reporting.

Lack of Punishment

The British were irate that perpetrators of these crimes were well known and yet went unpunished. In fact, many were decorated. *The Times* wrote editorials about the inhumanity of Ahmet Agha. MacGahan wrote that Porte's treatment of Ahmet Agha was a "mockery of European demand for justice."¹¹ Once the agitation began to gain ground, Sir Henry Elliot, began to demand justice against the perpetrators. He reported to Lord Derby, "With the names of individuals represented as having taken part in acts of oppression...to relieve [the Porte] from the suspicion of indifference to which it is now exposed."¹² Elliot knew the necessity to appease the British public, which could only be accomplished by showing remorse and

¹¹ J.A. MacGahan, *The Turkish Atrocities in Bulgaria*, (Geneva: Th.D. Dimitrov, 1966), 22.

¹² "Doc. 390, Sir H. Elliot to the Earl of Deby, July 14, 1876," in *British Documents on Foreign Affairs—Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print, Part I, From the Mid-Nineteenth Century to the First World War*. (ed. David Gillard), Series B, The Near and Middle East, vol. 2, (Frederick, Md.: University Publications of America, Inc., 1984), 278.

punishing the perpetrators. In February, Elliot was able to report that Ahmet Agha was condemned to death while many other known criminals were sentenced to hard labor for life. He also reported that Tusun Bey was acquitted of all charges.¹³

Gladstone's *Lesson in Massacre...* singled out Shefket Pasha, who was named Governor of the Danube Province in the beginning of March 1877. Gladstone wrote, "The fact that this paramount offender should have remained unpunished, rewarded, free, becomes yet more astonishing when we remember not only his place in the reports of Baring and Schuyler, but the efforts of Sir Henry Elliot."¹⁴ *The Times* correspondent, Antonio Gallenga wrote about Shefket Pasha in July, "Shefket Pasha never was fairly tried, made himself conspicuous at Constantinople on all solemn occasions, and in spite of all impudent contradictions, was appointed to posts of honour, to high command in the army, first on the Danube and finally in Armenia, where he is even now."¹⁵

Gladstone also raised complaints against the Porte for its total lack of remorse, "Among the many recitals of the defense or apologetic language by which the Porte was obliged to conceal its real sentiments respecting the Massacres, there is not to be found one single expression of condemnation, nay, not even of regret, for the utter ruin, and ineffable sufferings, of so many Bulgarians."¹⁶ The Ottomans' continued

¹³ "Doc. 538, Mr. Jocelyn to the Earl of Deby, February 19, 1877," in *British Documents on Foreign Affairs—Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print, Part I, From the Mid-Nineteenth Century to the First World War*. (ed. David Gillard), Series B, The Near and Middle East, vol. 3, (Frederick, Md.: University Publications of America, Inc., 1984), 223.

¹⁴ Gladstone, *Lessons in Massacre...*, 32.

¹⁵ Antonio Gallenga, *Two Years of the Eastern Question*, vol. 2, (London: Samuel Tinsley, 1877), 157.

¹⁶ Gladstone, *Lessons in Massacre...*, 60.

oppressive tax regime and their lack of reparations in Bulgaria was unsettling for many British readers.

Inability to Reform

The lack of punishment was a concern along with the greater perceived problem with the Ottomans, the inability to reform. A state unwilling to make progress was unsuitable of British support. In *Bulgarians Horrors and the Question of the East*, Gladstone expressed his feelings for the Ottoman government, with “no government ever has so sinned; none has so proved itself incorrigible in sin, or which is the same, so impotent for reformation.”¹⁷ MacGahan shared this view after seeing the aftermath of the atrocities, writing, “And these are the people from whom we expect reforms. There will be no reforms.”¹⁸ The Ottoman state could not be saved, as MacGahan fumed, “It will not last, or civilization is a delusion, justice a mockery, and Christianity a farce and a failure.”¹⁹

Yet the proposed British plans to reform the Ottoman Empire were often contradictory. Gladstone lamented, “Of the two hundred million sterling which in 20 years it borrowed from the credulity of European Exchanges a large part has been spent upon its military and naval establishments.”²⁰ Others saw the long-term survival of the Ottomans could only be based on the creation of a modern military. *The Times* felt that “All the evils of Turkey may be traced to the difference between

¹⁷ W.E. Gladstone, *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*, (London: John Murray, 1876), 63.

¹⁸ MacGahan, 102.

¹⁹ MacGahan, 102.

²⁰ Gladstone, *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*, 14-15.

the Osmanli as a conquering race and a military caste and the Christians as a people unfit for and unworthy of the privilege of bearing arms and sharing in the most sacred of duties – that of fighting for their country.”²¹ Equality for Christian subjects was certainly considered the foundation for reform but ultimately Europeans were skeptical of the possibilities for such equality.

There was a perception that Midhat Pasha’s Constitution, which guaranteed Christians equality, was “made for the Europeans, and not for the people of [the Ottoman Empire].”²² As *The Times* pointed out, “with reference to the impossibility of reform in the Turkish administration, trustworthy judges, zealous officials, capable soldiers, all are wanting.”²³ The treatment of Bulgarians helped to solidify the British idea that Christian equality under Ottoman rule was impossible.

Anti-Turkish and Civilizing Bulgarian Sentiments

The deeply ingrained anti-Turkish sentiment of the British public was clear during the Bulgarian agitation. Turks were un-European and Muslim in an age when social progress was synonymous with European and Christian. Lord Salisbury hoped, “The humanitarian and religious desires of the country would be found to coincide with the national interest.”²⁴ The inseparability of Christianity and humanitarianism was unambiguous for the majority of those involved with the agitation. Insults were

²¹ Arthur Arnold, *The Promises of Turkey*, (London: The Eastern Question Association, 1877), 7.

²² Gladstone, *Lessons in Massacre...*, 55.

²³ Hornby, 2.

²⁴ Peter Marsh, “Lord Salisbury and the Ottoman Massacres,” in *The Journal of British Studies*, vol. 11, no. 2 (May 1972), 66.

hurled at Derby and Disraeli, questioning their religion and thus, their nationalism. Disraeli was called, “A man of mystery whose sympathies would go over Islamism in preference to Christianity.”²⁵ *The Spectator* described him as “altogether Mahomedan in feeling”²⁶ and “a Turk of Turks, the garrotter’s friend.”²⁷

Alongside these derogatory Turkish and Muslim depictions, some anti-Semitism also emerged, often concerning Disraeli, who was of Jewish descent but baptized in the Anglican Church. Gladstone accused him of hating, “Christian liberty and reconstruction.” Gladstone had a strong suspicion that “Dizzy’s crypto-Judaism has had to do with his policy. The Jews of the East *bitterly* hate the Christians; who have not always used them well.”²⁸ John Boyd Kinnear theorized, “Both in Vienna and in London, some of the leading newspapers are the property of Jews, who, because of Turkish toleration and Christian persecutions, are disposed to back the Turks.”²⁹ These attacks on Turks, Muslims, and Jews further demonstrated the connection of Christianity and supposed social progress and humanitarianism. This pervasive feeling encouraged the tremendous outrage against the Ottoman Empire.

In contrast to the inhumanity of Turks, there was an obvious civilizing mission embarked on by the media on behalf of the Bulgarians. Gladstone described the Bulgarian revolt as, “It was as if the sheep were to attack the butchers, and fill him for a moment with alarm.”³⁰ Likewise, *The Times* believed, “The Christian

²⁵ Harris, 124.

²⁶ Harris, 138.

²⁷ Harris, 163.

²⁸ Bass, 281.

²⁹ John Boyd Kinnear, *The Mind of England on the Eastern Question*, (London: Chapman and Hall, 1877), 4.

³⁰ Gladstone, *Lessons in Massacre...*, 74.

subjects of the Porte had many faults—intolerance, ignorance, servility, fear; but they were, nevertheless, going with the stream of European progress.”³¹ Later that month, an editorial appeared in *The Times* that framed the Bulgarians as an asset to European society, writing, “The Bulgarians are, perhaps, the most promising nationality in Turkey. They are peculiarly industrious, and they have a turn for moneymaking.” Despite the adversity of the Ottoman government, Bulgarians “have made themselves the chief agricultural and commercial part of the community in spite of rapacious Pashas, venal Mussulman Courts, exclusion from all high public offices, and the general disdain of the ruling caste.”³²

MacGahan was one of the leaders in the mission to improve the portrayal of Bulgarians as oppressed European Christians. He admitted his preconceived notions that he, and many others, had about Bulgarians, “I have always heard them spoken of as mere savages, who were in reality not much more civilized than the American Indians.”³³ However, he was surprised to find that “there is scarcely a Bulgarian child that cannot read and write...the percentage of people who can read and write is as great in Bulgaria as in England and France.”³⁴ Schuyler’s Report was quick to mention wherever a church has been destroyed and Baring’s Report focused on the loss of livestock and potential revenue, but MacGahan’s articles paid special attention to Bulgarian schools, in a mission to depict Bulgarians as educated, progressive, and European.

³¹ *The Times*, August 14, p. 9, col., 2-3.

³² *The Times*, August 26, p. 7, col., 2-3.

³³ MacGahan, 48.

³⁴ MacGahan, 50.

The Aftermath

The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, coupled with the British occupation of Egypt in 1882, meant Britain no longer needed to rely on Istanbul to maintain expedient passage to India. The general anti-Ottoman public sentiment could be accepted by the government, which now had another means of protecting British interests. Finally, for Conservatives like Lord Salisbury, humanitarian desires and national interests coincided. After 1882, Britain became increasingly uninvolved and unsupportive of the Ottoman government. Meanwhile, Turkish-Russian relations improved dramatically. The longtime former enemies became partners on the basis of autocratic rule and their desire to check British power. A new economic partnership with Germany, funding the Baghdad Railway, represented the Ottoman's truest ally at the end of the century.³⁵ Some British politicians castigated Germany for its relationship with the Sultanate, however, as Charles Eliot wrote, "I do not know that Great Britain has any right to throw stones."³⁶

Britain's refusal to intervene on behalf of the Ottomans was seen as a tremendous leap towards changing the dynamics of British-Ottoman relations. In a speech on July 30, 1878, after the end of the Russo-Turkish War, Gladstone said, "In round numbers seven million persons who were formerly either under the direct sovereignty or suzerainty of the Porte, are to be henceforth as free from it as we are."³⁷ However, a feeling began to develop among these newly liberated Christians

³⁵ Yapp, 86-87.

³⁶ Eliot, 400-401.

³⁷ W.E. Gladstone, *The Berlin Treaty and the Anglo-Turkish Convention. Speech of the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone in the House of Commons on July 30th, 1878*, (London: The Liberal Central Association, 1878), 7-8.

that “neither Russia nor England could be depended upon to act as champion of Christianity unless it suited their own interest at the moment.”³⁸

Following the Bulgarian massacres, historian Harold Temperley wrote, “For the first time the public (and a much less educated public than of old) realized on a great scale and in a dramatic manner exactly what diplomatic support of Turkey meant.”³⁹ Ottoman misrule, repression of Christian subjects, and occasionally massacres had been the cost of Britain’s alliance with the deteriorating empire. Following the Bulgarian massacres, the British public was no longer willing to pay this price. Images of civilized, subjugated European Christians coalesced with unchanging, misruling, remorseless Turks. Certainly the Bulgarian massacres were horrific and capable of gripping the British public’s imagination but that alone could not have been enough to call for a drastic change in Britain’s longstanding, Eastern foreign policy.

The success of the agitation must ultimately be related to the press. Improved telegraph communication and increased foreign correspondence allowed for a new wealth of information to reach London at unprecedented speeds. Furthermore, improved printing technology allowed for longer newspapers, more detailed reporting and increased circulation. More information was being disseminated to more people at a much quicker rate. This must be contrasted to the government’s failure to acquire and publicize information during the summer of 1876. Elliot was reserved in reporting on the atrocities. His serious inquiries did not truly begin until Lord Derby sent him a clipping from *The Daily News* from June 23. Disraeli and the Foreign

³⁸ Eliot, 413.

³⁹ Temperley, *The Bulgarian and Other Atrocities, 1875-8*, 26.

Office were slow to release information to the public and when they did in the Blue Book of August 10, it was heavily criticized for its imprecision. The press made increased governmental transparency necessary, putting an end to its policy of silence. Independent print journalism established itself as an authoritative voice. While it may not have been as absolute as the government, it was considered legitimate enough to criticize government policy while reporting on events the government remained silent regarding. Its greatest advantage, particularly *The Times*, was the speed at which it disseminated information and the influence and credibility that it acquired throughout the 19th-century, allowing *The Times* to become a leading voice in the Bulgarian agitation, tremendously driving public opinion, and ultimately causing a significant overhaul in British Eastern policy.

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