

**THE ASSUMPTIONISTS' QUEST FOR A  
RELIGIOUS LEADER IN THE OTTOMAN LANDS:  
THE BULGARIAN UNIATE CHURCH MOVEMENT  
IN VICTORIN GALABERT'S DIARY (1862-1867)**

ASOMPSİYONİSTLERİN OSMANLI TOPRAKLARINDA  
DİNİ LİDER ARAYIŞI: VİCTORİN GALABERT'İN  
GÜNLÜĞÜNDE (1862-1867) BULGAR UNİAT KİLİSESİ  
HAREKETİ

**Aslı YİĞİT GÜLSEVEN\***

**Makale Bilgisi**

Başvuru: 20.12.2021

Kabul: 27.03.2022

**Article Info**

Received: Dec, 20, 2021

Accepted: Mar, 27, 2022

**Abstract**

*In the second half of the nineteenth century, Bulgarians sought to establish a national church independent from the Greek Patriarchate. This coincided with the expansion of the missionary activities of the Roman Catholic Church in the Ottoman lands through the Assumptionist sect. A member of this sect, the French bishop Victorin Galabert, was sent to Constantinople in 1862 to conduct Catholic missionary work. He was specifically assigned to establish the Bulgarian Catholic-Uniate Church. During his assignment, Galabert kept a diary of his personal experiences and impressions of the places he went and the events he witnessed. His diary, which apparently has never been studied by scholars, offers a close-up view of the Catholic orthodox conflict in Ottoman geography, as well as unique clues as to why efforts to establish a Bulgarian national church failed. The purpose of this study is to reconsider why the attempts to establish an independent Bulgarian national church failed in the 1860s, in the light of the information revealed by Galabert's diary. This study argues that the main reasons for the failure of efforts to establish a Bulgarian national church are the Catholic Church's underestimation of Russian influence in the region, and the problem of trust between the Bulgarians and the Catholic Church.*

---

\* Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Atılım University, asli.gulseven@atilim.edu.tr, ORCID: 0000-0002-9325-2965, Ankara Turkey.

**Key Words:** Victorin Galabert, Bulgarian Uniate Church, Russia, Ottoman, Catholic Church

### Öz

Bulgarlar ondokuzuncu yüzyılın ikinci yarısında Rum Patrikhanesi'nden bağımsız bir ulusal kilise kurmaya çalıştılar. Bu, Roma Katolik Kilisesi'nin Osmanlı topraklarındaki misyonerlik faaliyetlerinin Asompsiyonist mezhebi aracılığıyla yayılmasıyla aynı zamana denk geldi. Bu mezhebin bir üyesi olan Fransız piskopos Victorin Galabert Katolik misyonerlik çalışmalarını yürütmek üzere 1862'de İstanbul'a gönderildi. Özellikle Bulgar Katolik-Uniat Kilisesi'ni kurmakla görevlendirildi. Görevi sırasında Galabert, kişisel deneyimlerinin ve gittiği yerler ve tanık olduğu olaylarla ilgili izlenimlerinin bir günlüğünü tuttu. Araştırmacılar tarafından bu güne kadar incelenmemiş olan bu günlük, Osmanlı coğrafyasındaki Katolik Ortodoks ihtilafına yakından bakışın yanı sıra, bir Bulgar ulusal kilisesi kurma çabalarının neden başarısızlığa uğradığına dair önemli ipuçları sunmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın amacı, Galabert'in günlüğünün ortaya koyduğu bilgiler ışığında 1860'lı yıllarda bağımsız bir Bulgar ulusal kilisesi kurma girişimlerinin neden başarısız olduğunu incelemektir. Bu çalışma, Bulgar ulusal kilisesi kurma çabalarının başarısız olmasının temel nedenlerinin, Katolik Kilisesi'nin bölgedeki Rus etkisini hafife alması ve Bulgarlar ile Katolik Kilisesi arasındaki güven sorunu olduğunu ileri sürmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Victorin Galabert, Bulgar Uniat Kilisesi, Rusya, Osmanlı, Katolik Kilisesi

### Introduction

The rising national movements in Europe in the nineteenth century inspired the national awakening of the nations in the Balkans. An example of this was the Bulgarian national revival triggered by the Greco-Bulgarian Church conflict. In fact, the roots of this conflict go back to the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople and the millet system. The Greek religious authority over the Orthodox subjects in the Ottoman lands triggered the national feelings of the Orthodox subjects in the Ottoman Balkans at the beginning of the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> And the Bulgarians sought to establish a national church outside the Greek Patriarchate in order to get rid of the

---

<sup>1</sup> P. Nikov, *Vzrazhdanie na Blgarakiia Narod* (Sofia: Strashimir Slavchev, 1929), pp.10-40; V. Georgiadou, 'Greek Orthodoxy and the Politics of Nationalism,' *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, Vol.9, No.2 (1995), p. 301; Kemal Karpat, *Balkanlarda Osmanlı Mirası ve Ulusçuluk*, (çev. R. Boztemur) (Ankara: İmge, 2004), pp.15-16

pressure of the Greek assimilation on them.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, the Roman Catholic Church was increasing its propaganda efforts on the Ottoman lands. This situation paved the way for the Catholic Uniate movement, which would lead to the decrease of Russian authority in the Ottoman lands and the increase of France's influence. One such movement was the Bulgarian Catholic Church movement, which was stillborn in 1861, as a result of the disappearance of the elected archbishop Sokolski. The process of determining a religious leader to the Bulgarian Uniate movement spread over a long and difficult process. Yet, the Uniate movement lost its effectiveness and momentum between the years 1861-1867. By late 1860s the Bulgarian Exarchate movement gained the upperhand and Bulgarians, instead of converting to Catholicism, inclined towards the Exarchate on their way to gain national independence. The failure to find an appropriate leader to the Bulgarian Uniate Church between 1861 and 1867 was one of the principal factors that weakened this Uniate movement.

While the existing literature confirms that the Bulgarian Catholic Church Movement<sup>3</sup> has a leadership problem, it does not adequately analyze the reasons for this and the process that led to the movement's failure. One of the most important reasons for this is that there are no resources in the literature

---

<sup>2</sup> Thomas A. Meininger, *Ignatiev & the Establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate, (1864–1872)*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970, pp.15-17; V. M. Khevrolina, *Nikolai Pavlovich Ignatiev, Rossiiskii Diplomat* (Moscow:Kvadriga, 2009), pp.191-192.

<sup>3</sup> Although we don't come across monographic studies on the Bulgarian Uniate movement, we can say that this subject takes place generally in the sources on the history of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. Apart from that, a limited number of studies are devoted specifically to the development of the Bulgarian Catholic Church, most of which were published in the late nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century by the journal *Les Échos d'Orient*. This journal is one of the journals that was founded in 1897 by the Assopmtionists as part of the Eastern Mission of the Roman Catholic Church. J. Gadille, *Histoire Du Christianisme Des Origines à Nos Jours, Libéralisme, Industrialisation, Expansion Européenne (1830-1914)*, Vol.11, (Paris: Desclée-Fayard, 1995), p.827. For the literature about the subject in Turkish see, E. R. Güllü (2018). "Bulgar Eksarhlığı'nın Kuruluşu ve Statüsü", *Gaziantep University Journal of Social Sciences*, 17 (1), 350-361; Aşkın Koyuncu, *Bulgar Eksarhlığı, (Çanakale Onsekiz Mart Üniversitesi, SBE, Tarih ABD, Basılmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi)*, 1998; Ahmed Refik, "Türkiye'de Katolik Propagandası", *Türk Tarih Encümeni Mecmuası*, (1 Eylül 1340), 5/82, 257-276; Ahmed Refik, "Fener Patrikhanesi ve Bulgar Kilisesi", *Türk Tarih Encümeni Mecmuası*, (1 Mart 1341), 8/85, 73-84; C. Seyfeli (2011), "Osmanlı devlet salnamelerinde Bulgar Eksarhlığı ve Bulgar Katolikler (1847-1918)", *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, Cilt: 52, Sayı: 2, Ankara, s. 157-190. For a general analysis about the Bulgarian Uniate movement also see, Eldarov, Svetlozar (1994), "Uniatstvoto v Sadbata na Bulgaria", (Sofia: Abagar Foundation); Eldarov, Svetlozar (1998), "Uniati" in Anna Krusteva *Oshnosti i identichnosti v Bulgariya*, (Sofia, Petekson); E. P. Engelhardt, (2017), *Türkiye ve Tanzimat: Devlet-i Osmaniye'nin Tarih-i Islahatı 1826'dan 1882'ye*, (Çev.: Ali Reşad), (Haz.: Erol Kılınç), İstanbul: Ötüken Neşriyat.

regarding the events that took place during the leader election process for the Bulgarian Uniate Church. In this regard, the diary<sup>4</sup> of the French Catholic missionary Victorin Galabert, who was assigned to Constantinople in the 1860s, is a unique source that allows us to re-evaluate the information in the existing literature on the subject. The study of this diary is important in that it has never been studied academically before, and it provides a unique perspective on the events taking place around the Bulgarian Uniate movement.

Before going into the details of Galabert's diary, it would be useful to have a short biographical sketch of him. Victorin Galabert was a French bishop, who had a doctorate in medicine. In 1854 Bishop Galabert joined in Assumptions congregation and after 8 years he was sent to Constantinople as a religious missionary.<sup>5</sup> Galabert's mission was to propagate Catholicism among the Bulgarian millet of the Ottoman Empire. He stayed in Constantinople for 22 years and in the position of advisor to the Bulgarian Uniate Church archbishop, he traveled to almost every village and city of the Ottoman Bulgaria. During his mission in the Ottoman Empire he kept a diary, which contains detailed information regarding the successes, failures and the process of the Uniate Catholic Church movement.<sup>6</sup> This study focuses on the years between 1862-1867, during which the most important events that determined the future of this movement took place. In his diary Galabert wrote mainly about the chronological events on the way to form a Bulgarian Uniate Church and to promote the conversion to Catholicism among Bulgarians. In this regard he focused on Bulgarians' reaction towards the Greek Patriarchate and struggle for gaining their religious independence from the *Phanar*.<sup>7</sup> His diary provides insights on how the Bulgarians approached the conversion to Catholicism at both the social and intellectual level. Another crucial contribution of Galabert's notes is on the attitude of the Ottoman and Russian Empires towards this movement. In this regard, the diary mentions Porte's support for the movement and Russian intrigues to

---

<sup>4</sup> Victorin Galabert, *Journal*, Tome Premier, (1862-1866), (Sofia: Les Archives Parlement-1, Université SV. Kliment Okhridski, 1998); Victorin Galabert, *Journal*, Tome Deuxième, (1867-1869), (Sofia: Les Archives Parlement-8, Université SV. Kliment Okhridski, 2000).

<sup>5</sup> Galabert was sent to Constantinople by the founder of the Assumptionist congregation Père Emmanuel d'Alzonsent. For more information on Emmanuel d'Alzon see Jugie Martin, Le P. d'Alzon et l'Orient. À propos de son centenaire', *Échos d'Orient*, Vol. 13, No. 84, (1910), pp. 257-266.

<sup>6</sup> Galabert's diary was published by the St. Kliment Okhridski University in Sofia, Bulgaria in 1998. This is a bilingual work including both the original French and its translation Bulgarian. Unfortunately this diary has not been fully published yet. The two volumes that are already published covers the years between 1862-1869.

<sup>7</sup> *Phanar* is the name of the location of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Constantinople.

prevent the spread of Catholicism among Orthodox Bulgarians. Moreover, Galabert's diary also provides valuable data on the Ottoman Bulgaria, Thrace and Macedonia in terms of the number of Catholic, Orthodox and Muslim population in the villages, climate, topography and local culture.

This study reconsiders the reasons behind the failure of the Bulgarian Uniate movement, which is an important part of the Bulgarian national struggle. The aim here is to reveal the reasons by evaluating the processes that resulted in the failure of the Movement in the light of the information revealed in Galabert's diary. One of the factors that makes this diary worth studying is that it offers a new perspective on the approach of the Russian and Ottoman bureaucracy to the Bulgar Uniate Church movement. Another factor is that this diary has never been used in the academic literature although it provides a rich source of information from the viewpoint of Galabert. The study focuses on the leader election process for the Bulgarian Uniate church, based on the events and impressions described in Galabert's diary. More specifically, it focuses on the difficulties encountered by the actors in this process and the impact of the Ottoman and Russian states on the failure of the movement. Using information from Galabert's diary, this study seeks to find the reasons behind the failure of the Bulgarian Catholic Church movement. This article is divided into four parts: the first provides a background to the Bulgarian national independence movement and its relation with the formation of the Bulgarian Uniate Church. The next part of the article describes the events around the Bulgarian Catholic movement after Galabert's settlement at Constantinople. The third part will address the role of Dragan Tsankov in the development of the Uniate movement and the Catholic bishops' reaction to his attempts. The fourth part will reveal Galabert's claims on the Russian intrigues towards undermining the Uniate movement. Finally, the article will evaluate the main reasons for the failure of the Bulgarian Uniate movement and the role of Russian politics on this failure.

### **Background**

The Greek Orthodox Monopoly lasted for three hundred years in the Balkans until 1699, the Treaty of Karlowitz, when Austria and Venice left it up to the Balkan Christians how to carry out their religious rituals. This freedom of religious practice weakened the Greek authority over these Balkan people. By the mid-19th century France's protectorship of the

Ottoman Christian subjects came to the forefront. Around the same period, the Roman Church put forward the *Eastern mission*.<sup>8</sup>

As the Pope Pius IX, was interested in the separated Churches, and aimed at ending the schism, since 1848, he addressed to the Orientals, specifically to the Eastern Orthodox people.<sup>9</sup>

With the arrival of the first official French ambassador to Constantinople in 1534 the status of Catholics in the Ottoman Empire started to change due to the increasing French influence over the Porte. After the election of the Pius IX to the papacy in 1846 a discussion started on the Christian subjects of the Ottoman lands and their protectorship, resulting in the Crimean War of 1853.<sup>10</sup> The war ended up with a treaty limiting Russia's dominance over the Orthodox Christian people in the Ottoman Empire, which opened a new way to the Rome's 'Eastern mission'.<sup>11</sup>

Due to the increase in missionary activities in the Ottoman lands, Pope Pius IX called on the Greek Orthodox Church and the Eastern Churches to connect with the Catholic Church, yet this proposal was harshly rejected by the Greek Patriarch Anthimos IV.<sup>12</sup> Starting from the second half the 19th century the Roman Catholic Church, in order to take advantage from the social unrest and political disturbances in the Ottoman lands, wanted to activate its mission towards uniting the Orthodox Church and other local, Eastern Churches under its own authority. That mission focused on the Ottoman lands and the sect of 'Augustin de l'Assomption', also known as the Assomptionists, played an important role in this mission. They trained the clergy, especially members of the Eastern Churches, so that they would contribute to the Eastern mission. This sect made important contributions to the development of the movement by uniting other Christian churches with the Catholic Church.<sup>13</sup> Another movement, which was an extension of Pope

---

<sup>8</sup> J. Eade, 'Pilgrimage, the Assumptionists and Catholic Evangelisation in a Changing Europe: Lourdes and Plovdiv', *Cargo*, Vol.10, No.1-2, (2012), p.34.

<sup>9</sup> Martin, 'Le P. d'Alzon et l'Orient. À propos de son centenaire', p.259.

<sup>10</sup> Frazee, *Catholics and Sultans. The church and the Ottoman Empire*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp.27-28.

<sup>11</sup> J. Fairey, *The Great Powers and Orthodox Christendom. The Crisis Over the Eastern Church in the Era of the Crimean War*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp.1-14.

<sup>12</sup> Frazee, *Catholics and Sultans*, pp.27.

<sup>13</sup> The sect of 'Augustin de l'Assomption' founded in 1845 by Emmanuel d'Alzon in Nimes in France, and it was officially approved by Papa Pius IX in 1857. The Assomptionists undertook the task of spreading Catholic Christianity to the world through education and press. See, Frazee, *Catholics and Sultans*, pp. 227-232; For more details see For details see C. Babot, 'Chapitre I: Évolution Et Caractéristiques Des Missions Dans L'empire Ottoman' in *La*

Pius IX's project on Christians in Ottoman lands, was the Resurrectionist movement. Here, the target was Russia and it was aimed to get rid of Russian influence in line with the aim of uniting all Orthodox people with the Pope.<sup>14</sup> In overall, starting from the second half of the 19th century, the Catholic sects started to open branches in the Ottoman lands, and the Pope appointed a French Assumptionist to Constantinople to focus specifically on the Bulgarian people.

The second half of the 19th century, especially after the Crimean War, was the time when the Bulgarian national awakening began. At that time, Bulgarian intellectuals put forward the idea of establishing an independent church as a lever of this nationalist movement. Pressures arising from Russia's approach to the Balkan nations with a Slavic-orthodox brotherhood framework, Greece's Hellenization policy, and the efforts of the Polish missionaries to acquire anti-Russian supporters on the basis of Slavic ethnicity were increasing the enthusiasm of the Bulgarians to lay the foundations of an independent Bulgarian state with their own national church.<sup>15</sup>

On December 12/24, 1860, a group of Bulgarians in Constantinople addressed the prelate of the Armenian Catholics Anton Hassoun, with their request to unite with the Holy Roman Church keeping their liturgy, rites and religious ceremonies and customs. They also made the annotation that they would accept only Bulgarian clergy's administration.<sup>16</sup>

After that demand, a group of Bulgarian deputies acting on behalf of 2000 Bulgarians gave this petition to the Apostolic delegate of Constantinople, Paolo Brunoni,<sup>17</sup> requesting him to deliver this petition to the Pope Pius IX. The same petition was discussed also at the Porte, and soon after the approval of the Pope on January 21, 1861 the Porte also confirmed this movement. The Porte welcomed these new Bulgarian Catholics and declared that they were exempt from the jurisdiction of the Greek patriarchate, which-meant that they would stop paying tithing to the

---

*mission des augustins de l'assomption à Eski-Chéhir, 1891–1924*, (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2011), pp. 9-50.

<sup>14</sup> L. Moroz-Grzelak, 'The Slavic Aspect in the Bulgarian Mission of the Resurrectionists', *Bulgarian Historical Review*, (2014), 1–2, pp. 11-14.

<sup>15</sup> Moroz-Grzelak, 'The Slavic Aspect in the Bulgarian Mission of the Resurrectionists', p.11.

<sup>16</sup> C. Fabrègues, 'Le vicariat apostolique bulgare de Thrace', *Échos d'Orient*, Vol.7, No.44, (1904), p.35.

<sup>17</sup> Paolo Brunoni 1807-1870 was the vicar apostolic patriarchal of Constantinople, president of the Community of Union of the Bulgarians.

Patriarchate.<sup>18</sup>

This—was followed by the conversion to Catholicism of hundreds of Bulgarian families from Adrionople. From Patriarchate's perspective, several parts of Monastir and Kazanlık<sup>19</sup> were under threat of conversion. Russia was aware that these events were originating from the Bulgarian aspiration for their national independence. This religious movement, called the Uniate Church movement, would accelerate the alienation of Bulgarians from Orthodoxy, which would be followed by alienation from Russia. With this concern Russia applied to the Porte to prevent the separation of the Bulgarian Church.<sup>20</sup>

Iosif Sokolski<sup>21</sup>, who was an old Archimandrite, was appointed as the Archbishop of Bulgarian Uniate Church, by the Pope Pius IX, on April 8, 1861. After he returned to Constantinople he was granted *berat*<sup>22</sup> by the Porte. However, after two months from his arrival in Constantinople he disappeared. The Catholic clergy and the Bulgarian Catholic community believed that he fled to Odessa with the help of Russians. Before this sudden disappearance, there had been a considerable rise in the popularity of the

---

<sup>18</sup> Fabrègues, 'Le vicariat apostolique bulgare de Thrace', p.36.

<sup>19</sup> Monastir was the capital of Ottoman Rumelia in the mid nineteenth century, today it is known as Bitola and part of North Macedonia. Kazanlık is a Bulgarian town in today's Stara Zagora province, in the nineteenth century it was under the Ottoman rule with the name of 'Kazanlık'.

<sup>20</sup> Fabrègues, 'Le vicariat apostolique bulgare de Thrace', p.36.

<sup>21</sup> For more information on the early life and career of Iosif Sokolski see V. E. Kolupaev, 'Bolgarskiy Arkhiyepiskop Iocif Sokolskiy i ego sviaz s Rimom', *Studia Humanitatis* (International electronic journal) (2016), Vol.1. Sokolski was 75 when he became archbishop of the United Bulgarians. While he was going to be appointed to this duty, he was accompanied by important names representing Catholicism in the Ottoman lands. One of the names accompanying Sokolski was Dragan Tsankov, who was a Bulgarian merchant in Constantinople, and the publisher of the journal 'Blgaria'. The Uniat movement came to be known by the publishing of a pro-Catholic newspaper 'Blgaria' in 1859. The main purpose of the newspaper was to convince Bulgarian people that their national independence could only be achieved through a union with the Western world, entering under the authority of the Holy See rather than the Greek Patriarchate. M. Koinova, *Catholics of Bulgaria*, (Centre for Documentation and Information on Minorities in Europe – South East Europe, 1999), pp.7-8. Tsankov studied at the seminary in Odessa, then at the universities of Kiev and Vienna, from 1857 he lived in Constantinople, where he worked as a teacher in a French lyceum, at the same time he founded a Bulgarian printing house in a Catholic monastery, in which he began to publish the first Bulgarian books and magazines. See, V. E. Kolupaev, 'Bolgarskiy Arkhiyepiskop Iocif Sokolskiy i ego sviaz s Rimom'.

<sup>22</sup> *Berat* is a document issued by the Ottoman sultan to grant a privilege or to confer the right to possession of a state property. For details on Ottoman berat see N. Gök, 'An Introduction to the Berat in Ottoman Diplomats', *Bulgarian Historical Review* Vol. 3-4, (2001), pp. 141-150.

Uniate movement among the Bulgarians in the Ottoman land; but its momentum slowed down by the departure of Sokolski.<sup>23</sup> There were allegations that he had escaped or had been abducted from Constantinople by being tricked by the Russians.<sup>24</sup> Whatever had happened, the result was that the United Bulgarian Church movement, which had been initiated with great enthusiasm by the Pope, was weakened from the very beginning.<sup>25</sup>

When the future of this movement came to a deadlock, the Catholic Church decided to continue its eastern mission with a new archbishop. We see in Galabert's memoirs that the question of who will be appointed the religious leader of the Bulgarian Uniate church is more complex than what we see in the existing literature. Many events, full of intrigues and internal reckoning, took place in the process of finding a leader to the Uniate movement.

#### **Quest for a new leader for the Bulgarian Uniate Movement**

We understand from Galabert's diary how much damage Sokolski's disappearance did to this movement and caused the Pope to change his stance.<sup>26</sup> Despite the disappearance of Sokolski, Pope Pius IX continued his eastern mission decision, and sought to appoint a new archbishop for the mission.<sup>27</sup> Among many other religious missionaries the Assumptionists took their place with an Evangelist purpose in the Ottoman land.<sup>28</sup> In 1862 the Pope delegated the conversion of Ottoman Orthodox communities to the

---

<sup>23</sup> Fabrègues, 'Le vicariat apostolique bulgare de Thrace', pp. 36-37.

<sup>24</sup> Stoian Ivanov Chomakov, who was a revolutionary of the Bulgarian national independence movement, in early May 1861 visited the Russian ambassador to the Porte Prince Alexei Borisovich Lobanov-Rostovsky in order to ask him to recall the Russian vice-consul in Plovdiv, Bulgarian Naiden Gerov, from Plovdiv to Constantinople to persuade Sokolski to flee to Russia. That's why Tsankov believed that Chomakov was a Russian agent, and blamed him of allying with Russians to sabotage the Bulgarian Uniate Church movement. See, V. E. Kolupaev, 'Bolgarskiy Arkhiepiskop Iocif Sokolskiy i ego sviaz s Rimom'. For the kidnapping of Sokolski by Russians see also D. Kalkandjieva, 'The Bulgarian Eastern Catholic Church' in *Eastern Christianity an Politics in the Twenty-first Century*, ed. L. N. Leustean, (New York: Routledge, 2017), pp. 682-3.

<sup>25</sup> C. Armanet. 'Le mouvement des Bulgares vers Rome en 1860 (fin)', *Échos d'Orient*, Vol. 13, No. 81, (1910), pp.101-102.

<sup>26</sup> Galabert, Journal, Tome Premier, (1862-1866), p. 67-69, (1 March 1862)

<sup>27</sup> Martin, 'Le P. d'Alzon et l'Orient. À propos de son centenaire', p. 259.

<sup>28</sup> On June 3, 1862, Pope IX appointed D'Alzon with the Eastern mission, that is, establishing the unity of the Catholic churches and to reconnect the eastern churches with the Roman Church. Galabert notes that, struggle for influence not only between the various nationalities and religions, but also among Catholics, between the Archbishop, the Levantines, the Vincentians, the Dominicans, Capuchins, etc. Galabert, Journal, Tome Premier, (1862-1866), pp. 15, 18.

French Bishop d'Alzon, the founder of the Assumptionist sect, by telling him that he sought to bring certain populations of the Ottoman Empire back to the Catholicism.<sup>29</sup> The Pope, specifically asked d'Alzon to work on the evangelization of the Bulgarians.<sup>30</sup>

However, at that time d'Alzon had a limited staff to carry out this task, so he asked the help of the Polish Resurrectionists, with Father Jerome Kasciewicz<sup>31</sup> at their head. In November 1863, the Resurrectionists opened a school in Adrianople for the Uniate Bulgarians.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, in December 1862 d'Alzon had sent to Constantinople Victorin Galabert, who was a former doctor of medicine. In the first day of Galabert's presence in Constantinople, Bishop Brunoni introduced him to P. Arabadjiski and R.P. Malczynski, prominent members of the Bulgarian Uniates.<sup>33</sup> In the first day of his presence in Constantinople, on 6 December 1862, Galabert visited important delegates of the Catholic Church in the Ottoman Empire and discussed the need for restarting the Uniate movement. During his first days in Constantinople Galabert's impression was that despite all the sympathy and protection of the Ottoman Empire, the Eastern Catholic mission faced Greek and Russian threats. Galabert wrote, "The Turks [are] true protectors of Catholics in the East, the enemies are the Greeks, whose spiritual and nominal leader is in Constantinople; the real and political leader in St. Petersburg."<sup>34</sup> In the diary Galabert frequently repeated the sympathy of the Ottoman government toward the Catholic millets and the Catholic powers, because he believed the Orthodox millet was always under the risk of being seduced by Orthodox Russia, which posed a threat to the Ottoman sovereignty.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, during his meetings with the grand viziers Ali and Fuat Pashas, the main topic was that the Porte could only rely on the Catholic western powers. This rapprochement revealed itself also in the Bulgarian Uniate Church question. Galabert emphasized that the Bulgarian community had no one capable for the post of Uniate bishop, and that the Ottoman government was in line with Rome in this regard. He wrote, "Ali-Pasha does not want to give the berat to any of their [Bulgarian] nationals."<sup>36</sup>

Galabert's mission in Constantinople covered to establish educational

---

<sup>29</sup> Martin, 'Le P. d'Alzon et l'Orient. À propos de son centenaire', p. 260.

<sup>30</sup> Armanet, 'Le mouvement des Bulgares vers Rome en 1860 (fin)', p.106.

<sup>31</sup> E. Macar, *İstanbul'un Yok Olmuş İki Cemaati. Doğu Ritli Katolik Rumlar ve Bulgarlar*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002), pp.112-113.

<sup>32</sup> Armanet, 'Le mouvement des Bulgares vers Rome en 1860 (fin)'Crescent, p.106.

<sup>33</sup> Armanet, 'Le mouvement des Bulgares vers Rome en 1860 (fin)'Crescent, p.106.

<sup>34</sup> Galabert, Journal, Tome Premier, (1862-1866), p.15, (20 December 1862).

<sup>35</sup> Galabert, Journal, Tome Premier, (1862-1866), p.15, (20 December 1862).

<sup>36</sup> Galabert, Journal, Tome Premier, (1862-1866), p.67-69, (1 March 1862)

centres and seminaries for Bulgarians.<sup>37</sup> As from the first day of his mission, he sought to find a suitable and non-expensive place for establishing the Uniate movement house, and a seminary for education of future Uniate bishops.<sup>38</sup> Galabert underlined the fact that other religious groups have places and churches in best places, as they were wealthy.<sup>39</sup> However, the French government was not providing sufficient donation for the movement.<sup>40</sup> Nonetheless, finding a priest to lead this movement was more important than anything else. Bishop Brunoni, the Apostolic Vicar of the [Latin] Patriarchate of Constantinople, was planning to find a suitable priest to the head of the Uniate Bulgarians, who would adopt the Slavic rite. In Philippopoli there was a considerable number of Catholic people, under the administration of the Capuchin sect, assisted by local national priests.<sup>41</sup> Brunoni thought that this was the perfect combination for the Uniate movement, as it would satisfy both the Bulgarians and the Holy See. For the head of the Uniate Church Brunoni agreed on the name of a Latin Bulgarian priest Pierre Arabadjiski, who had been recommended by the apostolic vicar of Philippopoli.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, Arabadjiski was known for not having the qualities of a leader, as he lacked decisiveness, which made him open to foreign interference in the administrative duties.<sup>43</sup> Galabert wrote that when he visited Arabadjiski, in the first days of his appointment, he seemed very discouraged and not very confident. Besides, he considered that Arabadjiski did not have enough sympathy for the Bulgarians to devote himself to this duty. Arabadjiski told Galabert that "Bulgarians are eager for education, but they have little esteem for the clergy."<sup>44</sup>

In February 1862, Arabadjiski was appointed as the Archbishop, in place of the lost archbishop Sokolski. He was immediately recognized by the Porte as the civil administrator of the Uniates.<sup>45</sup> However, though he had the

---

<sup>37</sup> Galabert, Journal, Tome Premier, (1862-1866), p.203.

<sup>38</sup> In his notes Galabert mentioned the prices for the places he found in several locations like Pera, Kadıköy and Calcedoine. V. Galabert, Journal, Tome Premier, (1862-1866), p.21.

<sup>39</sup> Among all (Lazaristes, Dominicains, Souers de Charité, Religieuses de Sion, Freres des écoles Chrétiennes) the richest were the Lazaristes, who possessed a house at Péra, a college at Bebek, a house at Scutari (Üsküdar), a college at Salonique and a house at Monastir. Galabert, Journal, Tome Premier, (1862-1866), p. 21.

<sup>40</sup> Galabert, Journal, Tome Premier, (1862-1866), p.147, (20 June 1863)

<sup>41</sup> For more information on the mission of Capuchins in the Ottoman Empire, see R. F. O'Connor, 'The Capuchin Mission in Bulgaria and Reunion with Rome', *American Catholic Quarterly Review*, XLIII (1918), 205-27.

<sup>42</sup> Armanet. 'Le mouvement des Bulgares vers Rome en 1860 (fin)', p.105.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Galabert, Journal, Tome Premier, (1862-1866), p.21 (22 December 1862)

<sup>45</sup> Fabrègues, 'Le vicariat apostolique bulgare de Thrace', p.37.

permission from the Pope, Arabadjiski refused to pass from the Latin rite to the Slavic rite. So, a Polish priest, the R. P. Malczynski, who accepted to adopt the Slavic rite came to the assistance of Arabadjiski.<sup>46</sup> Galabert claims that the United Bulgarians took advantage of this act of Arabadjiski to rise up against him, whom they wished to force to withdraw. It was well known that in the first place Dragan Tsankov had rejected the leadership of Arabajiski as he was reluctant to adopt the Slavic rite. So according to Galabert, this uprising was staged by the intrigues of Tsankov, an influential and ardent representative of the Bulgarian Uniate movement.<sup>47</sup>

### **Dragan Tsankov and the Uniate Movement**

In a significant part of his diary Galabert mentioned Tsankov's intrigues to hamper the Uniate movement. He also seemed to believe that Arabadjiski's resignation was an intrigue designed by Tsankov.<sup>48</sup> When Arabadjiski resigned, the Uniate movement was left without a leader once more, and Brunoni restarted to think of a name. He thought of Malczynski, about whom there were serious drawbacks as he was a Polish priest. Galabert wrote that Jean-Calude Faveyrial, a prominent Lazarist and the advisor of Tsankov, would prefer a Bulgarian to be appointed to the head of the movement. However, due to his lack of Bulgarian language Galabert was not comfortable with this selection.<sup>49</sup> Galabert was aware of the fact that Bulgarians wanted a Bulgarian leader, but independent from the Armenian Catholics headed by the Bishop Hassoun. They rejected Malczynski, as their leader and instead they preferred Bishop Raphael Popov. Otherwise, many of them were even talking about abandoning the Union.<sup>50</sup> On March 1863, the Bulgarian committee met and among the participants were Father d'Alzon, Bishop Hassoun and his secretary Azarian, Faveyrial, Tsankov and Galabert. They discussed basically the resignation of Arabadjiski and who would be the next head of the movement. Galabert wrote that Brunoni also believed this resignation was the result of Tsankov's intrigue, and he preferred Malczynski to become the head. On the Ottoman side, the Grand-vizier Ali Pasha wanted to see a non-Bulgarian priest as the leader of the movement. Galabert wrote "... Ali-Pasha would probably refuse the *bérat* to a Bulgarian, [as Ali Pasha considers] that Mr Malczynski was the only candidate that could be accepted... Mgr Hassoun declared ... that Ali-Pasha had, after some difficulties, consented to receive the resignation of Mgr

---

<sup>46</sup> Armanet. 'Le mouvement des Bulgares vers Rome en 1860 (fin)', pp.105-106.

<sup>47</sup> Galabert, Journal, Tome Premier, (1862-1866), p.59, (22 February 1863)

<sup>48</sup> Galabert, Journal, Tome Premier, (1862-1866), p.59, (22 February 1863)

<sup>49</sup> Galabert, Journal, Tome Premier, (1862-1866), p.53, (4 February 1863)

<sup>50</sup> Galabert, Journal, Tome Premier, (1862-1866), p.63 (25 February 1863)

Arabajiski. He will grant the berat to Mr Malczynski who will be naturalized raya [reaya], under the responsibility of Mgr Hassoun, and that he will never consent to give them a leader of their [Bulgarian] nation." However, Tsankov strongly objected that proposal, and declared the Bulgarian people would never consent to have Malczynski as their leader."<sup>51</sup>

As a response to Tsankov, d'Alzon explained how the mechanism of union with Catholic Church worked in the past: "...in the Catholic Church apostolic times, the first procedures of a country had always been foreigners, until a native clergy had been formed; this is what we see now in America, in England and in all the missions. Why can't we do it with the Bulgarians, until they have capable and well-educated men that we take care of training them. I find that we have gone too far with you ...You [the Bulgarian community] are very demanding. As for having an original Bulgarian chef, it is not possible to give it to you today."<sup>52</sup> Then d'Alzon proposed four options to Tsankov, first "go to the Phanar", Tsankov said they will never go; second, "give yourself to the Russians," Tsankov answered they never will; third "stay in the Union, and you [the Bulgarians] no longer want it since you refuse to submit to the [non-Bulgarian] Catholic bishops"; the fourth option is to form a national church with a non-Bulgarian bishops "... to form a national, independent church with the native bishops and priests that we will give you. But I tell you that this is what we do not want." d'Alzon finally noted, "You [the Bulgarians] are, moreover, unique people. You have already made several schisms, ... Today you threaten to separate because we want to put strangers [non-Bulgarian bishops] at your head."<sup>53</sup> With these words, d'Alzon was emphasizing the distrust of the Catholic Church towards the Bulgarians.

Tsankov<sup>54</sup> was an important leader of the Bulgarian Uniate movement. He had a wide network in the Ottoman lands and he had already attracted many families to the Catholic movement. Tsankov himself was aware of his influence in the movement and, relying on it, he did not hesitate to demand more. When he insisted in having a Bulgarian priest as the leader, d'Alzon told him that with a few thousand faithful Bulgarians left they will continue

---

<sup>51</sup> Galabert, *Journal*, Tome Premier, (1862-1866), pp. 69, 71 (3 March 1863)

<sup>52</sup> Galabert, *Journal*, Tome Premier, (1862-1866), pp.71-73 (3 March 1863)

<sup>53</sup> Galabert, *Journal*, Tome Premier, (1862-1866), pp.71-73, (3 March 1863).

<sup>54</sup> For more information on Dragan Tsankov and his activities see Frazee, *Catholics and Sultans*, pp.243-247; Moroz-Grzelak, 'The Slavic Aspect in the Bulgarian Mission of the Resurrectionists', *Bulgarian Historical Review*, (2014), V.1-2, pp. 12-13; Hüseyin Mevsim, 'Bulgarlar Arasında Katolik Propagandası Yapan Bir Gazete: Bılgariya (1859-1863)', *Kebikeç*, No.50, (2020), pp.259-266.

the movement. "... and with them we [Assumptionists] will form a nucleus, which will grow gradually, we will prepare for them through schools and seminaries a native and educated clergy, as you lack educated men." Tsankov rejected that proposition and accused d'Alzon of slandering the Bulgarians. When the Bulgarian committee members reminded d'Alzon that the Pope once accepted to appoint a Bulgarian to the head of the Uniate movement, d'Alzon told them that " he [the Pope] gave you Sokolski who defected; your priests show an inconstancy, which makes it impossible to count on them [Bulgarian religious men]. It is not the Pope's fault that you have no one capable of leading you. He made an exception for you, by allowing priests of the Latin rite [Arabadjiski] to embrace your rite and your liturgy, and you show your gratitude to him by refusing these priests. Why would you be treated any differently from the Greeks and other nations? Bulgarians have no right to it."<sup>55</sup> With these words d'Alzon once again underlined that the Bulgarians were unreliable. Two important moments in this meeting were that, first, the Bulgarian bishop Raphael Popov, who can carry on liturgy in Slavic language, was proposed to come to Constantinople and become the assistant Bishop Malczynski; This option would offer some guarantees to Bulgarians. Second, Azarian, the secretary of Bishop Hassoun, who believed that Tsankov was the instigator and the secret initiator of the agitation among Bulgarians, proposed not to offend and alienate him, as he was the only one capable to redact the newspaper *Blgaria*.<sup>56</sup> Moreover, he could provide with great service to the Uniate movement as he could attract many Bulgarian to Catholicism and his sudden dismissal would turn him to a real enemy of the movement. The Committee finally decided that Tsankov would continue his activities but his manners would be under observation.<sup>57</sup>

Tsankov was known in the Assumptionist movement community for being a schemer. Many priests had witnessed the inconsistency of his discourses. In his diary Galabert mentioned that at a ceremony on June 14, 1863, he and Brunoni wanted to confront Tsankov about his discrepancies, but Tsankov always gave evasive answers. Tsankov accused the Assumptionist movement of offering bribe to the Bulgarian Bishop Raphael in order to persuade him to be the assistant of Malczynski. Father Brunoni refuted Tsankov in a decisive manner, and instead he blamed Tsankov of ruining the Uniate movement since the beginning. Referring to the resignation of Arabadjiski, bishop Brunoni accused Tsankov of reproaching

---

<sup>55</sup> Galabert, *Journal*, Tome Premier, (1862-1866), pp. 69, 73, (3 March 1863)

<sup>56</sup> For the journal *Blgaria* see, Hüseyin Mevsim, 'Bulgarlar Arasında Katolik Propagandası Yapan Bir Gazete: *Bilgariya* (1859-1863)', *Kebikeç*, No.50, (2020), pp.247-258.

<sup>57</sup> Galabert, *Journal*, Tome Premier, (1862-1866), pp.73, 77, (3 March 1863)

Arabadjiski for having intrigued to make him leave and also to have intrigued to prevent others from accepting Bishop Malczynski.<sup>58</sup>

During the Bulgarian Committee meeting on March 1863, Mr. Hassoun told Tsankov that Ali-Pasha had also declared that he would never give Bulgarians a native priest as a leader. Galabert wrote that, thereupon Tsankov addressed a protest petition to Ali-Pasha, against the choice of the Polish bishop Malczynski for head of the Bulgarian Church.<sup>59</sup> Tsankov brought together a significant number of people from the Bulgarian committee and made them sign the petition against the leadership of Malczynski. When Brunoni met Ali Pasha, the grand vizier told him about the petition given to him by Tsankov. Brunoni made the following explanation to Ali Pasha: "I know that this petition is the work of a few intriguers, because among the signatories some signed without knowing the content, and others out of smugness. *They do not want to accept Mgr Malczynski as their leader*, they say in this petition. I have already pointed out to His Excellence [Ali Pasha] that Bishop Arabadjiski having to withdraw before the same intriguers, we had to look for a man to replace him, and noted that we could not find anyone among the Bulgarians."<sup>60</sup> When Brunoni presented Malczynski to Ali Pasha, Ali Pasha told "he [Malczynski] is a foreigner, and they [the Bulgarians] don't want him; you cannot force it on them." Apart from that, another problem was that Malczynski was not an Ottoman subject and to become the head of the Uniate movement in the Ottoman lands he should be accepted as a subject by the Porte. Ali Pasha insisted that it was difficult to just recognize him as a subject and moreover it was not appropriate to appoint someone, who was not accepted as the Uniate movement's leader by the Bulgarians. So to resolve the issue, in 17 June 1863, Galabert arranged a meeting at Kadiköy, attended by Bishop Arabadjiski, Bishop Hassoun's secretary Azarian, Testa<sup>61</sup>, and Malczynski. In the meeting the following resolutions are adopted: 1) M. Testa and Galabert will review the signatures and signatories (to reveal whether the Bulgarian committee members signed on the petition being aware of the topic or not); 2) They will declare that there is no need to think about the reopening of the chancellery before the recognition of a leader (without saying who this leader will be). 3) Assure the Bulgarians that in any case Bishop Malczynski would only be a provisional leader until a capable leader

---

<sup>58</sup> Galabert, *Journal*, Tome Premier, (1862-1866), 131,133, (14 Juin 1863)

<sup>59</sup> Galabert, *Journal*, Tome Premier, (1862-1866), p.113, (19 April 1863)

<sup>60</sup> Galabert, *Journal*, Tome Premier, (1862-1866), pp.137, 139,141, (15 Juin 1863)

<sup>61</sup> Canon Charles Testa (1808-87) was the Vicar General of the Patriarchal Apostolic Vicariate of Constantinople.

can be found among them.<sup>62</sup> As can be understood from the decisions, a petition should have been submitted as a counter-action to the petition submitted to Ali Pasha. Namely, a collective petition of those, who endorsed Malczynski as the leader of the movement. Moreover, they added a clause in order to persuade the Bulgarians, indicating that Malczynski would be the 'provisional' Catholic leader.<sup>63</sup>

Had it not been for the petition of a group of Bulgarians the Catholic clergy in Constantinople could have almost persuaded Ali Pasha to appoint Malczynski as the religious leader. However, Galabert wrote that he already heard a gossip that a petition by those who wanted Malczynski as their leader would be signed soon, and this would be enough to convince Ali Pasha. Because a group of Bulgarians were complaining about Tsankov's attitude and wanted Malczynski as the leader.<sup>64</sup> On one hand the intrigues and on the other hand the rise of the Bulgarian Exarchate<sup>65</sup> movement were hindering the progress of the Uniate movement, by preventing the election of a permanent bishop. Finally, the signatures had begun to be collected.<sup>66</sup> Tsankov discovered this counter-petition and got very angry. He gathered the Bulgarian committee, warned them and tried to persuade them to stick with the request of native bishop.<sup>67</sup> Then when Galabert proposed the Bulgarians to accept Malczynski provisionally, the committee rejected this offer answering that "provisional will become a fait accompli." So Galabert assured them that Malczynski will not be appointed Bulgarian bishop, but Apostolic Vicar. Galabert guaranteed them that "the day the Pope believed he has found among your [Bulgarian] priests a priest worthy of being placed at your head, Mgr Malczynski will be dismissed, and also the Pope Raphael would be soon elevated to episcopal dignity to show that we do not want to monopolize the bishoprics for the Latins." Galabert requested the Bulgarian committee to give the Latin Church the necessary time to train qualified Bulgarian Catholic bishops.<sup>68</sup>

---

<sup>62</sup> Galabert, Journal, Tome Premier, (1862-1866), p.143, (17 June 1863)

<sup>63</sup> Galabert, Journal, Tome Premier, (1862-1866), p.143, (17 June 1863)

<sup>64</sup> Galabert, Journal, Tome Premier, (1862-1866), p.143, (17 June 1863), p145.

<sup>65</sup> For more information on the formation of Bulgarian Exarchate see Vovchenko, Denis: *Containing Balkan Nationalism: Imperial Russia and Ottoman Christians, 1856-1914*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2016, pp.145-172; Meininger, *Ignatiev and the Establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate (1864-1872)*; A. Gülseven, 'Russian Foreign Policy in the Ottoman Balkans (1856-1875): N. P. Ignatiev and the Slavic Benevolent Committee,' (PhD diss., İ. D. Bilkent University, 2017), pp. 94-133.

<sup>66</sup> Galabert, Journal, Tome Premier, (1862-1866), p.147, (20 June 1863)

<sup>67</sup> Galabert, Journal, Tome Premier, (1862-1866), p.147, (20 June 1863)

<sup>68</sup> Galabert, Journal, Tome Premier, (1862-1866), p.149, (21 June 1863)

### **Russian intrigues towards the Bulgarian Uniate Movement**

In Galabert's diary, we also notice descriptions of Russia's efforts towards the Uniate Movement. Galabert indicated that the Russian government was following the developments around the Uniate movement closely and intensifying its efforts for the establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate. Ultimately, the establishment and development of the Bulgarian Uniate Church with a Bulgarian priest at the head would mean the spread of Catholicism among the Bulgarians, and it would endanger Russia's political interests in the Balkans. Thus, while all the discussions about the head of the Bulgarian Uniate movement were going on, Russian Empire continued its own policy to increase the Russian influence on the Ottoman Orthodox Christian subjects either by diplomacy or by intrigues. Therefore, The Porte did indeed plan to alienate the Bulgarians from Russia. From the beginning of his career, the grand vizier Ali Pasha had been uncomfortable with Russian activities in the Ottoman Balkans. So, the bad news for Russia was that the Ottoman bureaucrats, who were aware of the Russian threat, at every opportunity expressed that they were on the side of Catholic missionaries.<sup>69</sup>

When Galabert met Fuad Pasha first time in 23 February 1863, Ali Pasha was also present in the meeting and the subject of conversation was the Sultan's position on the Uniate movement. Galabert wrote, "The Pope and the Sultan are enemies of the Russians, so it is in Turkey's interest to promote the [Uniate] movement, Ali-Pasha stated: "Europeans will always protect us from the Russians - Europeans in Turkey, who will protect us from them [the Russians]."<sup>70</sup> Galabert also wrote that in his conversations with Ottoman officials, they admit that they prefer Europeans rather than Russians or Greeks. For example a young Turkish officer, professor of French at the military school, during a conversation about the probable occupation of Herzegovina by the Austrians, told Galabert that "he would not consider as trouble if a European power would seize these countries, but he would want neither Russians nor Greeks, who are not civilized people."<sup>71</sup>

Not only the Ottoman administration but also the British government was concerned about the activities of Russians. Charles Blunt, English vice-consul, told Galabert on the Easter day about Russian and Greek consuls claiming that there was "a Turk, who was making powder and cartridges to distribute to his co-religionists, whose intention was to massacre Christians

---

<sup>69</sup> Fuat Andıç, Süphan Andıç, *Sadrızam Ali Paşa, Hayatı, Zamanı ve Siyasi Vasiyetnamesi*, (Istanbul: Eren, 2000), pp. 28–35.

<sup>70</sup> Galabert, *Journal*, Tome Premier, (1862-1866), p.61, (23 February 1863)

<sup>71</sup> Galabert, *Journal*, Tome Premier, (1862-1866), p.375, (4/16 September 1866)

at Easter." The vice-consul stated that he did not believe in any way that the Turkish populations could have such an intention, and that "these Russian and Greek consuls made themselves ridiculous by lending themselves to such pitiful intrigues."<sup>72</sup>

Galabert seemed to be convinced that Russian and Greek schemers were trying to turn Catholic population against the Ottoman administration and Turkish bureaucracy with their false stories. However, not only Ottoman bureaucrats but also priests and diplomats of the Catholic powers were aware of these intrigues.<sup>73</sup> In late 1867, traces of Russian were also found in another unrest in the Ottoman Balkans. The claim was that two Russian engineers were plotting intrigues and being involved in other activities under the pretext of technical field research. The governor of Ruse, Midhat Pasha, sent a message warning the governor of Adrianople on this issue and asked him to call the Ottoman garrisons. The leaders of the Catholic community in the region were also aware of this turmoil created by the Russians and were disturbed.<sup>74</sup>

The Russians engaged in diplomatic and educational activities in order not to lose their sphere of influence over the Orthodox Christian subjects in the Ottoman Balkans, which would benefit the Catholic Powers. Besides, it was obvious that they supported the establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate. We learn from Galabert's diary that the Russians, fearing a possible French influence on the Bulgarians, resorted to different ways to undermine the Uniate movement. In short, according to Galabert, the Russian officials in the Ottoman lands were trying to keep the Bulgarians under their influence by intrigues, if not by diplomacy. For this very reason, according to Galabert, when Russian and French influences were compared, it was much more likely for the Russians to be successful in the Bulgarian quest. When Mr. Bourrée asked Galabert "But if they [Bulgarians] are given an independent patriarch, do you think the Uniates will remain loyal?" referring to the Bulgarian Exarchate movement, which challenged the Uniate movement, Galabert answered "Some yes, others no. Because there were two streams available for the Bulgarians; some tend towards Russia, others towards Rome, convinced that the true independence of their nation lies in the Catholic Union." To the next question, "Which is the more powerful of these two currents?" Galabert answered, "Without a doubt, it is Russian, because it is the only one sustained and supported; the current towards Rome

---

<sup>72</sup> Galabert, Journal, Tome Deuxième, (1867-1869), (Easter day, April 11/23, 1867)

<sup>73</sup> Galabert, Journal, Tome Premier, (1862-1866), p.45.

<sup>74</sup> Galabert, Journal, Tome Deuxième, (1867-1869), p.193, (24/6 December 1867)

would become stronger if it were more sustained. Until today Russian influence has not been combated effectively, the French government not having seen fit to debase and buy conscience. Nevertheless everywhere the French agents protect the United Bulgarians."<sup>75</sup>

### **Finally a Bulgarian Bishop: Raphael Popov**

Although the Porte, especially Ali Pasha favoured a non-Bulgarian leader for the Bulgarian Catholic community, he changed his mind with the resistance of the Bulgarians against a foreigner as their leader. The Bulgarian community invoked against Malczynski's leadership, as he was a foreigner, moreover he was a Polish.<sup>76</sup> As a result, Malczynski had also to withdraw on April 1865. During Arabadjiski's and Malczynski's administrations the prominent names of the Catholic union, including Tsankov, left the community and re-joined the Orthodox Church, and dedicated themselves to the success of Bulgarian Exarchate.<sup>77</sup>

Now Arabadjiski and Malczynski had to be replaced with a new religious representative. The Congregation of Propaganda intended to choose the priest Raphael Popov, a well-known monk.<sup>78</sup> In April 1866, accompanied by Galabert, Popov started his eight-month tour around all Catholic Uniate centres at the Ottoman lands. From Salonika in the South, to Philippopoli in the North, these two bishops visited every villages and towns. This visit triggered new conversions to Catholicism, and even some of the Bulgarian schismatics, started to question their beliefs, once they met a Bulgarian spiritual leader after a long time. While many religious or ordinary Bulgarian trying to sabotage the Catholic movement under the command of Russia, the last and most loyal representative of this movement was Popov. Those who helped him in this cause were the Vincentians of Macedonia, that is, the Lazarists, the Assumptionists of the Augustinians in Thrace, and a few secular priests who remained loyal to the cause in Macedonia and Thrace.<sup>79</sup>

Popov asked the Congregation in Rome to appoint himself a Latin priest to accompany him everywhere in the status of counsellor. In April 1867, he

---

<sup>75</sup> Galabert, Journal, Tome Premier, (1862-1866), pp.97-99, (26/7 June 1867)

<sup>76</sup> Intrigues of the Polish and the clash between the Polish clergy and Bulgarians were widely mentioned in Galabert's diary.

<sup>77</sup> Armanet. 'Le mouvement des Bulgares vers Rome en 1860 (fin)'Crescent, pp.105-106.

<sup>78</sup> Fabrègues. 'Le vicariat apostolique bulgare de Thrace', p.37. There is a gap in Galabert's diaries between 1865 and 1867. The first note after 1865 begins after Popov was elected in 1867.

<sup>79</sup> Fabrègues. 'Le vicariat apostolique bulgare de Thrace', p.37.

left Philippopoli to settle in Adrianople.<sup>80</sup>

Although the Propaganda had designated two names of non-Bulgarian priests as companion of Popov, Brunoni considered Galabert as the appropriate companion. Brunoni told that he recommended Popov to have with him a religious man as advisor, and he pointed to Galabert. Eventually, Galabert became the official advisor of Popov.<sup>81</sup>

Galabert was aware that Russian intrigues would increase with the coming to power of a Bulgarian priest, and he emphasized the necessity of making this movement successful as quickly as possible. Therefore, Galabert counselled Popov to draw up a plan to hasten the development of the Uniate movement. According to Galabert, for this purpose, the most important thing was first of all to equip, each Uniate village with a church and a priest, then to take care of training school teachers.<sup>82</sup>

#### **A Russian Agent: Konstantin Raiko Kouroukafa**

Galabert wrote that after Popov was elected the head of the Bulgarian Catholics, the Russian government again took action to block the Uniate movement during the re-appointment of the representatives of the millets in the Ottoman Medjlis. When it was proposed to choose "an Armenian or Latin Catholic reaya to represent the Uniates to the great Medjlis", Russians provoked the Greek archbishop to suggest the Porte that "instead of distinguishing between Greek Christians, Bulgarians, Armenians, Latins and Jews, to make only one category Christians and Jews, given the small number of United Bulgarians, Armenians, Latins, etc. ..." However, the Ottoman high bureaucracy rejected that offer and declared "these various Christians have their leaders recognized by the Porte, to whom he will address himself when he will need them."<sup>83</sup>

During his visit to various villages, Galabert noted that he came across issues where the movement had regressed due to the intrigues of the Russians. In the villages of Adrianople Russian consulate officials financed the priests that were loyal to Russia. And these priests abused this material relationship to their advantage by threatening to leave their job. Moreover, Galabert detected that in some places Konstantin Raiko Kouroukafa<sup>84</sup> played

---

<sup>80</sup> Armanet. 'Le mouvement des Bulgares vers Rome en 1860', p.108.

<sup>81</sup> Galabert, Journal, Tome Premier, (1862-1866), pp.253-257, 263, (2 June/21 May 1866)

<sup>82</sup> Galabert, Journal, Tome Premier, (1862-1866), pp.281-283, (26-18 June 1866)

<sup>83</sup> Galabert, Journal, Tome Premier, (1862-1866), p.211, (23/11 April 1866)

<sup>84</sup> In some places it was referred as Kourokoff (Konstantin Raiko Kouroukafa (?-1867)). He was an ardent supporter of the Uniate movement in Adrianople, later he became enemy of the movement.

the mediator role between the Russian consulate and these schemed priests.<sup>85</sup> Moreover, Galabert witnessed that Kouroukafa convinced some Catholic young Bulgarians to leave Bulgarian school and to enrol in the Greek school.<sup>86</sup>

Galabert was convinced enough that Kouroukafa was an agent of Russia, whose job was to gain Popov's trust, watching his every move and plotting to make the Uniate movement fail. For this purpose, he was even ready to falsely convert to Catholicism. Galabert wrote: "Bishop [Popov] tells me that Kouroukafa is ready to become Catholic, that he has sent him to make proposals on this subject. I answer him that I do not believe in his sincerity and that he will be regarded as a secret agent of Russia, in his person. ... I answer him that men like Kouroukafa dishonour the causes they serve, that he will be regarded as an agent of Russia, which for a long time has been looking for such a man among those around him and his appointment as Capou-oglan<sup>87</sup> will reflect a certain dishonour on Mgr."<sup>88</sup> However, despite Galabert's all advices Popov persisted in his design on Kouroukafa, he wanted to present him to the Porte as capou-oglan.<sup>89</sup> While the process of Kouroukafa's appointment as capou-oglanı was in progress and there were no obstacles to its realization, Popov himself learned that Kouroukafa, accompanied by a Greek priest, visited the houses of the Uniates to detach them from the Union. In two days it revealed that Kouroukafa had contracted 24,000 piasters to the Greek patriarch as debt, promising to destroy the Uniate movement after a year. However, as he could not fulfil his promise, he had to sell everything he owned to pay his debt."<sup>90</sup> Popov then understood that all these were the intrigues of Russia and he had promised to reveal it to the Ottoman government.<sup>91</sup>

By 1867, as the momentum of the Uniate Church movement started to decrease, the Bulgarian Autonomous Orthodox Church discussions began to rise its voice. This period had also coincided with the election of the new Patriarch to the Greek Orthodox Church that would determine the fate of the Bulgarian national church question. Finally, in 1870 the Ottoman sultan

---

<sup>85</sup> Galabert, Journal, Tome Premier, (1862-1866), p.301, (24/12 July 1866)

<sup>86</sup> Galabert, Journal, Tome Premier, (1862-1866), p.299 (19/7 July 1866)

<sup>87</sup> Boys of threshold is the name for *Capou-oglan* in Ottoman language. These were the representators of a millets, See, Ivan Sofranov, *Histoire du mouvement bulgare vers Eglise Catholique au XIX siecle, Premiere Periode Les Origines (1855-1865)*, Vol.1, (Rome, Paris, New York, Tournai: Desclée & Cie-Editeurs. 1960), p.187.

<sup>88</sup> Galabert, Journal, Tome Premier, (1862-1866), p.303,( 29-30/ 17-18 July 1866)

<sup>89</sup> Galabert, Journal, Tome Premier, (1862-1866), p.305, (31/ 19 July 1866)

<sup>90</sup> Galabert, Journal, Tome Premier, (1862-1866), pp.307, (6 Augustos 1866)

<sup>91</sup> Galabert, Journal, Tome Premier, (1862-1866), p.307, (August 4 / July 23, 1866)

issued a *ferman* (royal decree) for the establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate that signed the de-facto failure of the Bulgarian Uniate Church movement.

### **Conclusion**

The Bulgarian national church movement in the nineteenth century is extremely important because it is at the intersection of multiple issues. In the macro perspective, these issues are the Eastern mission of the Catholic Church, Russia's desire to assume the patronage of the Orthodoxy, and the struggle for the survival of the Ottoman Empire, and in the micro perspective, the desire of the Ottoman millets to gain their independence.

In that sense, the Bulgarian Uniate movement was important for the national revival of the Bulgarians because for the first time in history the Ottoman Empire recognized Bulgarians as a separate ethno-religious group, independent from the Greek Patriarchate. Moreover, this movement accelerated the development of the Bulgarian Exarchate, which was another option to gain Bulgarian independence from the Greek authority.

Although for the Bulgarians the apparent reason of this was conversion to Catholicism, its main reason was to gain Bulgarian national independence from the Greek Church. In order to achieve this goal, one prerequisite was to gain the protectorship of the Catholic states, which was not in the interest of the Russian Empire.

In the beginning, Russia had to develop a new policy in response to Rome's Eastern mission. While Russia preferred to keep the Orthodox subjects in the Balkans under its influence, it wanted them to stay undivided, that is, to gather these subjects under a single patriarchy (The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate). However, later on, Russia had to withdraw from this decision and started to pave the way for this seemingly inevitable split in line with its own interests. By supporting the split between Bulgarians and Greeks, Russia began to work at full speed to establish an independent Bulgarian Orthodox church. Instead of an independent Bulgarian Catholic church under Western influence, a Bulgaria that did not recognize Greek authority, yet still under Russian influence, was in the best interest of Russia.<sup>92</sup> The Ottoman high bureaucrats, especially Ali and Fuad Pashas were aware of Russia's plans towards the Ottoman Balkans and they sided with the Western powers. In the Uniate Church question the Porte continued to show sympathy to the Catholic missionary activities on its lands by supporting the French Assumptionist clergy. However, upon the objection of

---

<sup>92</sup> M. Koinova, *Catholics of Bulgaria*, pp.8-9.

Bulgarian Catholic community to the appointment of a non-Bulgarian priest to the post of Uniate bishop the Porte changed its stance.

Galabert's diary reveals that the main reason for the failure of this Uniate movement was the lack of a religious leader to lead the Bulgarian Catholic Movement. Every priest who emerged had left his post, either because of the Bulgarian side's objection or because of Russia's intrigues. Galabert himself was well aware of why the movement had not been successful. In his diary, he reveals in all details what happened in the process of finding a leader for this movement, and the intrigues that were going on. The Ottoman administration supported this movement because of its tendency to ally with the Western states in the post Crimean War period. Especially in his meetings with Ali and Fuad Pashas, Galabert reported that he was impressed by the constructive attitudes of these Ottoman grand-viziers. On the contrary, he was uncomfortable with Russia's attempts to sabotage the Uniate movement, either through Greek Priests or other intermediaries. In particular, Galabert's persistent warning to Popov about the scheming activities of Russia shows that Galabert gained experience in Russia's eastern policies after all his discussions with the Ottoman high bureaucrats and the delegates of other European powers, and the representatives of Ottoman millets. In addition, the distrust of Galabert and the Catholic clergy in Constantinople towards the Bulgarian religious men declined the momentum of the Uniate movement by leaving it headless. Because, the Catholic priests once considered Bulgarians as schismatic and unreliable, they resisted appointing a Bulgarian religious leader to the post of Uniate bishop. Yet this resistance could only last until 1867, when Raphael Popov, a Bulgarian bishop, was appointed as the head of the Bulgarian Catholic Church. Until this time, the distrust of the Catholic clergy towards the Bulgarian religious men distanced both the Bulgarian intellectuals supporting the movement and the Bulgarian millet—that were tired of the Greek Orthodox Church's religious authority. For instance, Tsankov lost the trust of the Catholic Church with his inconsistent attitudes. Later, he considered that the Catholic clergy was insulting the Bulgarian millet and he withdrew his support for this movement by re-joining the Orthodox Church.

It is highly possible that Galabert's comments and observations were subjective, selective and partial. Although it should be approached with a critical eye, it nonetheless remains a unique primary resource providing detailed and critical insights into the Bulgarian national revival, which, we cannot reach through secondary sources. We can clearly understand from Galabert's memoirs that the failure of the Bulgarian Uniate movement was rooted in the developments between 1861-1866. Evaluating these

developments described in Galaberts' diary, we can deduce that there were three main reasons for the failure of the Bulgarian Uniate Movement: the loss of trust between the Bulgarians and the Catholic Church; the attempts by the Russians to weaken this movement with various intrigues; and the fact that the Catholic Church misjudged the Bulgarians and failed to grasp the influence of Russia on the region.

### References

- Andıç, Fuat, Süphan Andıç, *Sadrızam Ali Paşa, Hayatı, Zamanı ve Siyasi Vasiyetnamesi*, (Istanbul: Eren, 2000).
- Armanet, C., 'Le mouvement des Bulgares vers Rome en 1860 (fin)', *Échos d'Orient*, Vol. 13, No. 81, (1910), pp.101-110.
- Babot, C., 'Chapitre I: Évolution Et Caractéristiques Des Missions Dans L'empire Ottoman' in *La mission des augustins de l'assomption à Eski-Chéhir, 1891–1924*, (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2011), pp. 9-50.
- Eade, J., 'Pilgrimage, the Assumptionists and Catholic Evangelisation in a Changing Europe: Lourdes and Plovdiv', *Cargo*, Vol.10, No.1–2, (2012), pp.27-46.
- Fabrègues, C., 'Le vicariat apostolique bulgare de Thrace', *Échos d'Orient*, Vol.7, No.44, (1904), pp. 80-84.
- Fairey, J., *The Great Powers and Orthodox Christendom. The Crisis Over the Eastern Church in the Era of the Crimean War*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).
- Frazer, C. A., *Catholics and Sultans. The church and the Ottoman Empire*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
- Gadille, J., *Histoire Du Christianisme Des Origines à Nos Jours, Libéralisme, Industrialisation, Expansion Européenne (1830-1914)*, Vol.11, (Paris: Desclée-Fayard, 1995).
- Galabert, Victorin, *Journal*, Tome Premier, (1862-1866), (Sofia: Les Archives Parment-1, Université SV. Kliment Okhridski, 1998).
- Galabert, Victorin, *Journal*, Tome Deuxième, (1867-1869), (Sofia: Les Archives Parment-8, Université SV. Kliment Okhridski, 2000).
- Georgiadou, V., 'Greek Orthodoxy and the Politics of Nationalism,' *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, Vol.9, No.2 (1995).
- Gök, Nejdet, 'An Introduction to the Berat in Ottoman Diplomats', *Bulgarian Historical Review* Vol. 3-4, (2001), pp. 141-150.

*The Assumptionists' Quest For A Religious Leader In The Ottoman Lands...*

- Gülseven, Aslı, 'Russian Foreign Policy in the Ottoman Balkans (1856-1875): N. P. Ignatiev and the Slavic Benevolent Committee,' (PhD diss., İ. D. Bilkent University, 2017).
- Kalkandjieva, D., 'The Bulgarian Eastern Catholic Church' in *Eastern Christianity an Politics in the Twenty-first Century*, ed. L. N. Leustean, (New York: Routledge, 2017), pp.681-703.
- Karpat, Kemal, *Balkanlarda Osmanlı Mirası ve Ulusçuluk*, (çev. R. Boztemur) (Ankara: İmge, 2004).
- Khevroolina, V. M., *Nikolai Pavlovich Ignatiev*, Rossiiskii Diplomat (Moskva: Kvadriga, 2009).
- Koinova, M., *Catholics of Bulgaria*, Centre for Documentation and Information on Minorities in Europe – South East Europe, 1999, www.cedime.net, access: 19.12.2021.
- Kolupaev, V. E., 'Bolgarskiy Arkhiepiskop Iocif Sokolskiy i ego sviaz s Rimom', *Studia Humanitatis* (International electronic journal) (2016), Vol.1.
- Macar, E., *İstanbul'un Yok Olmuş İki Cemaati. Doğu Ritli Katolik Rumlar ve Bulgarlar*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002), pp.112-113.
- Martin, Jugie, 'Le P. d'Alzon et l'Orient. À propos de son centenaire', *Échos d'Orient*, Vol.13, No.84, (1910), pp.257-266.
- Meininger, T., *Ignatiev and the Establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate (1864–1872)* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970).
- Mevsim, Hüseyin, 'Bulgarlar Arasında Katolik Propagandası Yapan Bir Gazete: Bilgariya (1859-1863)', *Kebikeç*, No.50, (2020), pp.259-262.
- Moroz-Grzelak, L., 'The Slavic Aspect in the Bulgarian Mission of the Resurrectionists', *Bulgarian Historical Review*, (2014).
- Nikov, P., *Vzrazhdanie na Blgarakiia Narod* (Sofia: Strashimir Slavchev, 1929).
- O'Connor, R. F., 'The Capuchin Mission in Bulgaria and Reunion with Rome', *American Catholic Quarterly Review*, XLIII (1918), 205-27.
- Sofranov, Ivan, *Histoire du mouvement bulgare vers Eglise Catholique au XIX siecle, Premiere Periode Les Origines (1855-1865)*, Vol.1, (Rome, Paris, New York, Tournai: Desclée & Cie-Editeurs. 1960).
- Vovchenko, Denis, *Containing Balkan Nationalism: Imperial Russia and Ottoman Christians, 1856-1914*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).