

ANTON GRAF PROKESCH VON OSTEN AND THE BABI/BAHA'I FAITH  
THE ADRIONOPLE EPISODE

Although Bahá'u'lláh's proclamation to the kings and rulers was, with one exception, ignored or rejected by its recipients, leading members of the diplomatic corps of the same European countries attempted to protect Bahá'u'lláh and his followers from the autocratic power of the Persian and Ottoman Imperial governments. Among such efforts were the offer of asylum made by the Russian Minister in Tíhrán, Prince Dolgorukov, and the escort he provided for Bahá'u'lláh's journey from Tíhrán to Baghdád; the offer of British citizenship made by Colonel Sir Arnold Burrows Kemball, representative of the British crown in Baghdád; and the repeated remonstrations addressed to the French and Ottoman governments on Bahá'u'lláh's behalf by Arthur Comte de Gobineau.

One of the members of the diplomatic corps who attempted to protect Bahá'u'lláh was Anton Graf Prokesch von Osten, Ambassador of the Austrian Empire to the Sublime Porte. Records including his private correspondence in the Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv in Vienna reveal that Prokesch-Osten intervened with the Ottoman authorities in support of Bahá'u'lláh in an attempt to have the edict banishing Bahá'u'lláh and his followers to the notorious penal colony of 'Akká withdrawn.

Anton Prokesch's entire life was spent in the service of the Austrian Empire. Influenced by his experiences in the course of the French occupation of Styria during his youth, as well as by his "enlightened" educational background, at the age of eighteen he abandoned his law studies to join an Austrian regiment fighting the troops of Napoleon. Following several decorations for bravery, he was promoted to the general staff of the Austrian army, and rose to the position of adjutant to Prince Karl zu Schwarzenberg, victor of the Battle of Leipzig. Following Schwarzenberg's death, Prokesch found the army confining and unsatisfactory, and requested a transfer to the Austrian navy, which was granted in 1824.

At this time the Austrian navy was attempting to protect the interests of Austrian merchants caught up in the Greek war of independence.<sup>1</sup> It was here that Prokesch made his first acquaintance with the Orient. However, Prokesch's early enthusiasm for the Greek cause, which had grown out of his interest in German romanticism and his identification with Byron, soon withered; he wrote a former professor that, precisely because he loved Greek, "the sight of the people who presently populate that sacred ground fills me with such pain."<sup>2</sup>

By mid 1825, Prokesch's accounts of the situation had attracted such attention from his superiors that he was requested to send reports "on the martial activities in the archipelago" directly to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Clemens von Metternich.

His reports showed such insight into "Oriental affairs" that when rising tensions between Muḥammad-'Alí Páshá, Viceroy of Egypt, and the Sublime Porte<sup>3</sup> made it necessary for the Austrian government to dispatch an observer to the Viceroy's court in

Cairo, Prokesch was chosen. This marked the beginning of his diplomatic career. By mediating the settlement of a long-standing feud between the Viceroy and the Sultán, Prokesch was able to enhance the standing of Austria in the Near East.<sup>4</sup>

As a result of his successful mission to Egypt, Prokesch was appointed Chief of the General Staff of the Austrian Navy in the Eastern Mediterranean.<sup>5</sup> With the termination of the Greek war of independence, Prokesch was ordered to return to Vienna and arrived in February 1830. Because of the success of his campaign against the pirates in the area, during which, with only two Austrian warships at his command he sank thirty-six pirate vessels, he was awarded the Leopoldsorden and knighted, taking the surname "of the East": Anton Ritter Prokesch von Osten.<sup>6</sup> It was at this time that the first three of his numerous writings about the Orient were published: Reminiscences of Egypt and Asia Minor,<sup>7</sup> The Land between the Cataracts of the Nile, which included the results of his painstaking research on Egyptian antiquities, including the first astronomically determined map of Nubia,<sup>8</sup> and Travels in the Holy Land in the Year 1829.<sup>9</sup> These works clearly express his love for the Orient.

Prokesch-Osten had been previously chosen as the first Austrian envoy to the newly established state of Greece, but, because of the unsettled situation in Greece at that time, Metternich had decided not to fill that post. Therefore, he was sent to Italy as Metternich's personal representative to guard Austria's interests during the upheavals then shaking the Papal States.<sup>10</sup>

In 1833, following Muḥammad-'Alí Páshá's conquest of Syria, Prokesch-Osten was sent to Alexandria as the Austrian envoy to the Viceroy's court. He was instructed to join the English envoy in attempting to convince the Viceroy to reduce his demands upon Sulṭán Mahmúd II. The damage caused by Muḥammad-'Alí Páshá's Syrian campaign nearly gave the coup de grâce to the entire Ottoman Empire<sup>11</sup> and therefore had to be minimized lest Russia move into the void created by the weakening of the Sublime Porte's control over the area. Although the mission was successful--the Egyptians eventually withdrew from Syria under pressure from the European powers--respite for the Sublime Porte proved to be only temporary.

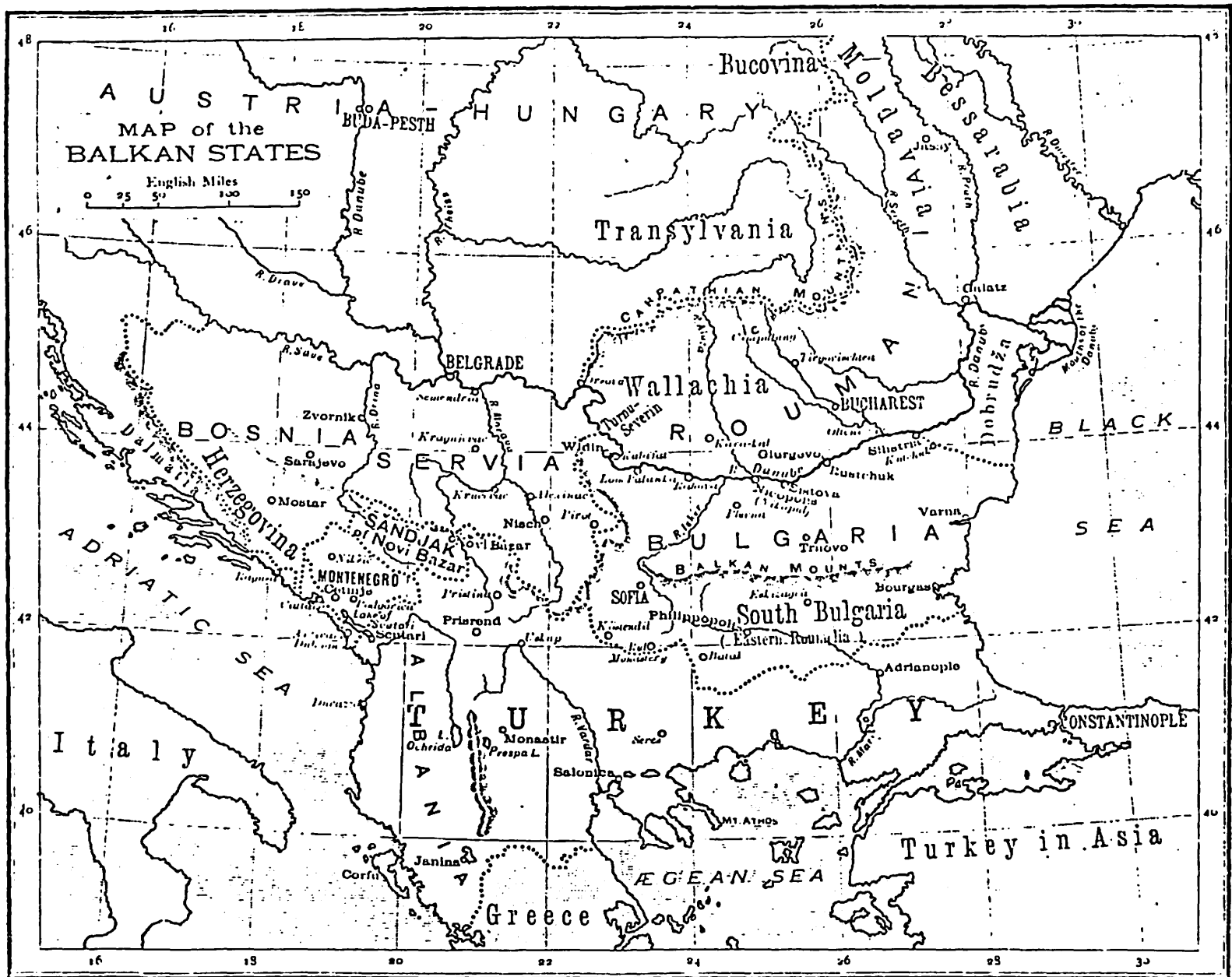
After Prokesch-Osten's return from Egypt, he was viewed in Austria--and Germany as well--as the leading specialist in Oriental affairs, based on his diplomatic activities as well as on his careful research on Egyptian, Greek and Etruscan antiquities.<sup>12</sup> Thus, as events made it necessary to fill the post of minister to Greece, there was no question, even in foreign capitals, that Prokesch-Osten was the proper person for the job. During his tenure in Athens, Prokesch-Osten was enobled with the title of Baron (Freiherr).

For fifteen years Prokesch-Osten worked to bring a stable, viable government to power in Athens.<sup>13</sup> In 1849, he was recalled and appointed envoy to the Prussian court and later to the Deutsche Bundestag (the federal Diet) at Frankfurt. Here Prokesch-Osten found himself--and Austria--pitted against Bismark--and Prussia--in a struggle for mastery of the German Confederation.<sup>14</sup>

It was in Frankfurt that Prokesch-Osten met Arthur Comte de Gobineau, recording in his diary: "Every evening with Comte Gobineau and his wife from Martinique."<sup>15</sup> In his summary of 1854, with which he closed his diary entries for that year, Prokesch-Osten wrote, "with thanks I accept the Gobineaus, whom this year brought me. Both good and spiritually mature. Through him, to my delight, introduced to Chinese and Indian literature."<sup>16</sup> The correspondence that began at this time lasted until Prokesch-Osten's death in 1876.<sup>17</sup>

The appointment of Anton Freiherr Prokesch von Osten as internuncio<sup>18</sup> of the Austrian Empire to the Sublime Porte in 1855--at the age of sixty<sup>19</sup>--was both the culmination of a life of service to Austria and the fulfillment of a long-cherished desire.<sup>20</sup> The legation in Constantinople was Austria's foremost mission in the Near East. All other legations and consulates in this area reported to the internuncio, who in turn reported directly to the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Vienna.

The course of the Danube, "the aorta of the Austrian monarchy" as Radetzky had called it, which emptied into the Black Sea, meant that Austria's Near East policy--especially that toward the Ottoman Empire--was of vital importance. With its own interests in mind, Austria endeavored to strengthen the Ottoman Empire against the encroachments of Imperial Russia, and, during the second half of the nineteenth century, against the rising tide of nationalism in the Balkans.<sup>21</sup>



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Prokesch-Osten had long desired this important position, not only because of his familiarity with the Porte and with many of the officials in Constantinople, but also because of his affinity <sup>with</sup> toward the Orient. He shared with Gobineau the feeling that European civilization was decaying. Both believed that a wave of renewal sweeping westward out of the uncorrupted Middle East offered the only possibility for reversing the ever-increasing decadence in Europe.<sup>22</sup> Prokesch-Osten's convictions were mirrored in his fascination for Ottoman customs and institutions,<sup>23</sup> which he had felt since the Greek war of independence. Although he clearly saw the signs of political disintegration in Ottoman Empire, Prokesch-Osten's belief in Ottoman strength and potential was a constant theme in his actions and reports throughout his service in Constantinople.<sup>24</sup>

The death on 7 September 1871 of 'Alí Páshá, a statesman revered by both Prokesch-Osten and his colleague Alexander Freiherr von Hübner,<sup>25</sup> was the final factor in his decision to resign his post and retire from public life. At the ceremony in which Prokesch-Osten tendered his formal resignation, Emperor Francis Joseph I. elevated him to the hereditary rank of count (Graf), as Berger has it, "in order that it be recognised with which regret he let him leave the diplomatic service."<sup>26</sup>

In his final audience with the Sultán, he was awarded the Order of Osmaniè with diamonds "for his services to the Ottoman Empire." As the steamer carrying Prokesch-Osten away from Constantinople rounded the Golden Horn, the cannons on the shore were fired in final salute.

Following his retirement from diplomatic service, Prokesch-Osten collected material for his memoirs--which he never completed--and traveled extensively in Europe and North Africa until his death on 26 October 1876.

Anton Graf Prokesch von Osten first learned of the Bábí religion<sup>27</sup> from Gobineau: according to a letter dated 29 December 1865, he read of the Bábís in the manuscript of Gobineau's book Religions et Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale. Prokesch expressed to Gobineau his favorable impression of the Teachings of the Báb in a letter of 5 January 1866:

"I am on page 336 of your book, in the middle of the Teachings of the Bábís, and close to becoming a Bábí myself. Everything is wonderful in the history of this historical and humanitarian phenomenon, even the ignorance of Europe about a matter of such colossal importance. I, worthy representative of Europe in this respect, knew nothing of it. I heard of it from you."<sup>28</sup>

He notes that he is most impressed with "the explanation of evil as the sole result of the recession of the emanation from its source." This teaching, he remarks, "seems to me to be more worthy, more exalted than everything that has been previously said by any philosopher or founder of a religion." Prokesch-Osten also notes that "the teaching with regard to the prophets pleases me infinitely, as it is conciliatory and precludes fanaticism."

As entries in his diary show, it was at a dinner Prokesch-Osten gave on 6 January at his residence that he learned from Comte Rochechouard, the French chargé d'affaires in Tíhrán, that Bahá'u'lláh, "the present-day Báb," was interned in Adrianople. He records that Rochechouard "spoke a great deal about Bábism."<sup>29</sup>



At his next audience with 'Alí Páshá, on 8 January, Prokesch-Osten broached the subject of the "Báb" (Bahá'u'lláh) and the Bábí religion. 'Alí Páshá spoke of Bahá'u'lláh "as a man of great distinction, exemplary conduct, great moderation, and extremely dignified demeanor."<sup>30</sup> Concerning the Bábí Faith, 'Alí Páshá expressed to Prokesch-Osten the opinion that it was a doctrine deserving of great respect; it cleared away certain anomalies which Islám had taken from the Judaic and Christian teachings, such as the struggle between good and evil in which God, the Omnipotent, is nevertheless powerless against evil, or that of eternal punishments. From a political point of view, however, he maintained that the Bábí doctrine was unacceptable both in Persia and in Turkey, as it recognized only the sovereignty of the Imámate. 'Alí Páshá added that this view was the origin of the century-long dispute between the Shí'ahs and the Sunnís, but noted at the same time that the Shí'ah government in Persia had since abandoned this position, which the Bábís were now championing.<sup>31</sup>

Intrigued by all that he had heard and read, Prokesch-Osten directed a "query regarding the Báb"<sup>32</sup> to the Austrian consul in Adrianople, Gustav Wilhelm von Camerloher on 10 January.<sup>33</sup> Unfortunately, the text of this letter has not yet come to light.

In his reply,<sup>34</sup> Camerloher reports that Bahá'u'lláh, "here commonly know as Anschád Effendi,"<sup>35</sup> had been interned in Adrianople for the past three years, along with his two wives, "almost all of His relatives" and more than sixty of His followers. The "Khán," as Camerloher refers to Bahá'u'lláh, was formerly the Shaykhu'l-Islám of Persia, but was banished from that

country due to His "reformatory sectarian endeavors with strong Sunnī tendencies," whereupon He traveled to Baghdád. Following Persian protests, He was ordered to Constantinople, and then interned in Adrianople. Camerloher states that Bahá'u'lláh receives from the Ottoman government a monthly allowance of 5,000 rials; from His followers, all of whom live in the patriarchal household,<sup>36</sup> He receives the proceeds of their activities as tobacconists, dealers in carpets or antiquities, confectioners, carpenters, painters or lamplighters; and that this money is then shared with each according to his needs and merits. According to Camerloher, Bahá'u'lláh is "barely 36 years of age,"<sup>37</sup> yet He accepts the strongly Oriental homage done him by His followers, including even His brothers and relatives, who approach Him on their knees, as His due. He never leaves His house, but is affable and genial to His visitors. Sulaymán Páshá, the former Váli of Adrianople, whom Camerloher styles as Shaykh of a Darvish "lodge," is reported as having visited Bahá'u'lláh several times, whereas Bahá'u'lláh does not associate with other officials. Camerloher further reports that in the city it is rumored that Bahá'u'lláh brought great riches with Him to in Adrianople, "gold, precious stones and other valuables," but that He has had to sell many of them, "magnificent horses,<sup>38</sup> and ... a carpet at a price of 80,000 rials." In closing, Camerloher reports "He is highly esteemed by everyone everywhere."

Although certain details are erroneous--Bahá'u'lláh's age, His riches--Camerloher's report generally agrees with the accounts of Áqá Ḥusayn-i-Ashchí and Áqá Muḥammad-Riḍáy-i-Qannád-i-Shírází,<sup>39</sup>

two of Bahá'u'lláh's companions. In order to gather this information within the space of one or two days, Camerloher must have spoken with his contacts in the city. The reverence with which Bahá'u'lláh was viewed is obvious in the fact that, although He was a Persian of Shí'ah background in exile amongst Sunnís, the report contains no negative information; in fact, Bahá'u'lláh is even attributed with Sunní tendencies, a sign of the informants' approval.

The index of Prokesch-Osten's correspondence indicates that he wrote several letters to Europe regarding the Bábí religion. His correspondence with Sir Henry Bulwer<sup>40</sup> and Alexander Freiherr von Warsberg<sup>41</sup>--which continued for some time--attests to his admiration for the Báb and His teachings.

As Prokesch-Osten's entire correspondence with Gobineau between October 1866 and May 1868 is missing,<sup>42</sup> it is impossible to ascertain if they corresponded regarding the Bábí religion. Unfortunately, a comparison of the index of correspondence with the published Correspondance entre le Comte de Gobineau et le Comte de Prokesch-Osten reveals that further letters from Prokesch-Osten to Gobineau are also absent from that collection.<sup>43</sup>

It was during this nineteen-month period, however, that events with grave consequences for the Bahá'í Faith took place: the rebellion of Mírzá Yahyá and his subsequent intrigues, which weakened the Faith in the eyes of its enemies and emboldened them to move against it.<sup>44</sup> Unsigned letters, purporting to have been written by Bahá'ís and boasting of their numbers, were covertly thrown into the houses of notables in Constantinople,<sup>45</sup>

playing into the hands of those officials who were increasingly concerned about the numbers of Bahá'ís in Adrianople. In addition, erroneous stories about the deeds and plans of the Bahá'ís were circulated. One of these, the suggestion that Bahá'u'lláh was involved with Bulgarian revolutionaries, so alarmed Fu'ád Páshá, the Minister of Foreign Affairs,<sup>46</sup> that he instigated the Sulṭán to take action.<sup>47</sup> Thus 'Abdu'l-'Aziz issued a famán dated 26 July 1868 condemning Bahá'u'lláh and several of His companions<sup>48</sup> to perpetual banishment to the notorious penal colony of 'Akká (St. Jean d'Acre), stipulating their close confinement, and forbidding them association with each other or with the local inhabitants. As a further reason for this drastic action, the exiles were accused of having grievously erred and of having led others astray.

According to documents in the archives of the British Foreign Office,<sup>49</sup> the Reverend Mr. Rosenberg, a Protestant missionary from Britain, had acquainted the foreign consuls in Adrianople with the plight of Bahá'u'lláh. Mr. John D. Blunt, the British consul at Adrianople, sent a dispatch to his minister in Constantinople, Sir Henry Elliot, stating: "I do not know what the tenets of this 'Babee' sect are. The Reverend Mr. Rosenberg ... believes that they are adopted from the Holy Scripture, and this believe naturally excited his sympathy and zeal on behalf of Bahá'u'lláh." Blunt further confirms the information that Camerloher had earlier supplied to Prokesch-Osten, namely that Bahá'u'lláh "has led a most exemplary life in this city," and "that He is regarded with sympathy, mingled with respect and esteem, by the native Mahomedans."<sup>50</sup>

Aqá Ḥusayn-i-Āshchí later related:

"... all of a sudden the consuls of the foreign powers became aware of what was happening and together they sought the presence of Bahá'u'lláh. The soldiers stationed around the house, blocking the way to everyone, could not prevent the consuls from entering. After paying their homage, they said they had come as a body, and any one of them whom Bahá'u'lláh might command would take up the issue with the Turks and ward off this evil."<sup>51</sup>

According to his account Bahá'u'lláh categorically declined their "oft-repeated offer."

The account of Bahá'u'lláh's exile to 'Akká as contained in the government archives of the foreign powers involved is somewhat different. For example, on 10 August, in a further dispatch to Elliot concerning this matter, Blunt enclosed an appeal for the protection of the British consulate, written in Turkish and said to be from Bahá'u'lláh. He reported that similar appeals had been addressed to Blunt's colleagues in Adrianople.<sup>52</sup>

Shortly after receiving this appeal, Blunt had been visited by his Austrian colleague, Camerloher, who wished to discuss the situation with him. Blunt reported that Camerloher had "strong reasons" to believe that Bahá'u'lláh and His companions were to be delivered imminently into the power of the Persian government and that Camerloher had already submitted the case to his superior, Prokesch-Osten.<sup>53</sup> As neither of them felt that they could officially interfere without instructions, they sent telegrams to their Embassies in Constantinople requesting guidance.<sup>54</sup>

The actual departure of the exiles did not take place as planned on 10 August; Bahá'u'lláh refused to leave Adrianople until the debts which His agent had made in the bazaars had been paid. Accompanied by a Turkish captain, Hasan Effendi, and a squad of soldiers, Bahá'u'lláh and His followers left Adrianople on 12 August.

While Camerloher's dispatch of 10 August to Prokesch-Osten is missing, Prokesch-Osten's papers contain a copy of his reply dated 19 August.<sup>55</sup> In it, Prokesch-Osten maintains that when one divests the exile of the Bahá'ís of all of the "incorrect alarms--i.e., the surrender of the Bahá'ís to the Persians or their interrogation by the Shaykhu'l-Islám, etc.--"what remains is a "police measure, more or less severely executed, which is within the authority of every government, and in which, for that very reason, no independent government will brook interference." He himself, he informs Camerloher, has spoken with Fu'ád Páshá, "who is as enlightened as any European minister," about the Bahá'ís, and believes that Sir Elliot had done so also. Bahá'u'lláh and His companions, Prokesch-Osten continues, are being banished to 'Akká, "a less dangerous point," not because of their doctrines, rather because of the "divisive force inherent in every sect." Such a force, he states, is especially dangerous in the Balkans of that period, as "certain agents, sprinkled over the entire European Turkey, have the crumbling away of the population in all directions as their objective."

As a further reason for not being able to intercede for the Bahá'ís, Prokesch-Osten mentions the innumerable examples of the intolerance toward dissention that Christian history--not only in the Middle Ages, but also in recent years<sup>56</sup>--contains. Compared with these, Prokesch-Osten maintains, this policy measure against the Bahá'ís barely deserves mention. "This does not excuse intolerance, but it weakens our voice when we preach tolerance of dissenters, who as a sect of Islám disquiet the faith of the masses."

Prokesch-Osten goes on to state that he is familiar with the Teachings of the Báb.

"The naive report of the Rev. Mr. Rosenberg [which was evidently included in Camerloher's dispatch--K.D.B.] proves that he knows nothing of them, and that he has the most peculiar illusions [regarding them]. In the Teachings of the Báb there are views concerning the creation of evil and concerning the final reconciliation of the same in God to which an English missionary is as little likely to soar as a Turkish mullah--and the latter is probably more likely."

On 25 August, Gobineau wrote Prokesch-Osten that he had read of the incident in Courrier d'Orient, and that he does not agree with the Ottoman policy toward the Bahá'ís, "who have requested their support and are willing to become their subjects." If the government persecutes the Bahá'ís, it will lose the special favor with which many Bahá'ís in the pásháliks of Van and Baghdád view it, as well as that of the Bahá'ís in Persia, which could be a "strong force opposed to the very aggressive disposition of the Qájár dynasty." As the Bahá'ís very definitely need assistance, Gobineau believes they could receive it from the Russians, which would not be in the best interests of Turkey.

In closing, Gobineau states that he feels that he is doing something useful for the Porte when he intervenes for the "poor Bábís" and pleads for their protection.<sup>57</sup>

In spite of his rather brusque reply to Camerloher's dispatch, Prokesch-Osten records in his diary that, on 24 August, he traveled to the Bosphorus for a (further?) audience with Fu'ád Páshá "mainly because of the Adrianople ban."<sup>58</sup> The details of this talk, however, are unavailable until the letter he wrote to Gobineau on 28 August, and in which he described his activities on behalf of Bahá'u'lláh and the Bahá'ís, is found.

Prokesch-Osten was acting in his own name--and not as internuncio of the Austrian Empire--when he intervened in support of the persecuted Bahá'ís. This is substantiated by his inclusion of the entire correspondence with Camerloher regarding the Bahá'ís in his private papers, rather than in the official embassy files. In fact, no mention of the Bahá'ís has yet been found in Prokesch-Osten's official dispatches to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is probable that he felt that the Foreign Minister, Friedrich Freiherr von Beust--who considered the Near East to be of secondary importance--would neither understand the Teachings of the Báb nor be concerned about the persecution of His followers. Thus Prokesch-Osten, the internuncio, was required to issue to his subordinate instructions which must have been distasteful at the very least to Prokesch-Osten, the admirer of the Báb.

"I recognize you very well indeed in that



which you did for the Bahá'is," responded Gobineau on 31 August. "I am delighted that there were exaggerations in the reports, but I believe that Fu'ád is not fully informed."<sup>59</sup> Gobineau further reports that the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh are rapidly spreading amongst the 200,000 or 300,000 Persians living in the Ottoman Empire, and adds that the (Christian) missionaries are "imbeciles" if they believe that they can make an impression on the "enthusiasm of this new Faith."

According to Gobineau, Bahá'u'lláh "has turned to me several times with reports of persecutions [of Bahá'ís] in Manşúriyyah in Egypt, which were instigated by the Persian consul there."<sup>60</sup> Gobineau states his conviction, that the Sublime Porte has a very serious interest in this matter, not only because of the large numbers of Bahá'ís living within the Empire, but also because the Bahá'ís in Persia, if properly cultivated, could serve as a counterweight to the Qájárs. It is obvious that Gobineau had not recognized the changes that were taking place as Bahá'u'lláh abrogated Teachings of the Báb and revealed new principles in their stead and as the understanding of these new Teachings spread. The principle of noninterference in political matters would have precluded any political reaction such as Gobineau anticipated, should the Porte have followed his advice and extended protection to the Bahá'ís.

Gobineau further included in his letter of 31 August a letter he had written to Bahá'u'lláh, describing the actions Prokesch-Osten had taken on Bahá'u'lláh's behalf and attempting to reassure Him. Gobineau asked Prokesch-Osten to see that the letter was forwarded to Bahá'u'lláh. From the letter it is clear that Prokesch-Osten spoke with more than one member of the Turkish government regarding Bahá'u'lláh.

Camerloher had answered Prokesch-Osten's letter of 19 August on 22 August<sup>61</sup> with a critique of the Ottoman policy regarding the Bahá'ís which was very similar to that of Gobineau. Prokesch-Osten must have admonished him that the parallels Camerloher drew between the Turkish treatment of the Bahá'ís and their treatment of the Bulgarian Catholic Union were incorrect, for in a dispatch dated 12 September,<sup>62</sup> Camerloher states that he was referring less to the concrete case of the Bahá'ís than to the general consequences derived from Fu'ád Páshá's actions.<sup>63</sup>

In the same dispatch, Camerloher reports that he has arranged for Gobineau's letter to Bahá'u'lláh to be delivered to His address via Gallipoli. He also includes a photograph of Bahá'u'lláh, "the noble-hearted martyr" and characterizes the portrait as "wohlgetroffen" (a good likeness), which would imply that he had seen Bahá'u'lláh.

A further enclosure to Camerloher's dispatch was a German translation of a letter, the original of which was written in Turkish, from "'Abbás Effendi, the son of Husayn" (i.e. Bahá'u'lláh), and addressed to the Reverend Rosenberg. Camerloher himself probably translated the letter as his knowledge of Turkish was one of the reasons given for awarding him the post of Austrian consul.

According to this letter, the trip from Adrianople to Gallipoli required six days. When they arrived in Gallipoli they were met by a Turkish major, who had brought prisoners from Constantinople. (Among these prisoners were Mírzá 'Alí-i-Sayyáh, Mishkín-Qalam, Aqá 'Abdu'l-Ghaffár, Muḥammad-Báqir-i-Qahvih-chí and Darvísh Şidq-'Alí.)<sup>64</sup>

The author records that this major had an order banishing Bahá'u'lláh, two of His brothers (Mírzá Musa and Mírzá Muḥammad-Qulí), as well as one other (Darvīsh Şidq-'Alí) and two enemies of the Faith (Siyyid Muḥammad-i-Işfahání and Áqá Ján Big) to the penal colony of 'Akká.<sup>65</sup> The remaining Bahá'ís were to be taken to Constantinople and scattered in small groups to different fortresses.<sup>66</sup> To this threat of dispersal, the Bahá'ís replied that they would prefer to be "drowned in the sea, together with wives and children, or have our heads cut off," than to be separated from Bahá'u'lláh. The letter mentions that they sent a written petition to the English legation asking that the legation intervene for them at the Sublime Porte.

As yet no answer had been received to this petition, as the letter states that they were "in despair of their lives."<sup>67</sup> The letter closes with the writer's acknowledgment of Rev. Rosenberg's zeal and goodwill, and conveys Bahá'u'lláh's greetings to Rev. Rosenberg, and to Artin and Boghos Effendi, (members of the local Armenian Protestant community), as well as the greetings of the writer and of the other Bahá'ís.

It cannot be ascertained if 'Abdu'l-Bahá was indeed the author of this letter until the original is found. However, the contents of the translation give no reason to suspect that He did not write it. Should it prove to be from His pen, this letter would add to the discrepancy between the official Consular dispatches in the archives of the Austrian, British and French governments and the accounts of this period given by Bahá'u'lláh Himself as well as by two eye-witnesses--Áqá Ridá and Áqá Husayn-i-Ashchí, as originally pointed out by Balyuzi.<sup>68</sup>

The final letter regarding Bahá'u'lláh's banishment to 'Akká which has come to light in the course of my research was written by Gobineau to Prokesch-Osten on 18 November 1868.<sup>69</sup> "I have received a long letter from Bahá'u'lláh," he writes, "he is in St. Jean d'Acre, held prisoner in a barracks which stands in ruins, along with some of His companions--men, women, and children." Gobineau then describes the situation in 'Akká as related to him by Bahá'u'lláh.<sup>70</sup>

Concerning the reasons for this exile, Gobineau writes that he is willing to believe Fu'ád Páshá, who had assured Prokesch-Osten<sup>71</sup> that "the money and the intrigues of the Persian legation in Constantinople have nothing to do with this matter; what then remains is a Turkish brutality, committed without the least excuse." The conjecture that the Bahá'ís wish to convert to Christianity is "too ridiculous," writes Gobineau, for "when one believes that he is God or companion of God, and leaves his country and suffers all of the persecutions of the world for this belief, then he does not convert to another faith."

Addressing Prokesch-Osten, Gobineau writes that he is attempting to do what he can to help these unfortunates, "but you know how much chance I have of being understood. Therefore, I request your continued assistance." He then adds that Bahá'u'lláh has asked him to convey His gratitude to Prokesch-Osten for the latter's interest in His situation and that of His companions.

In closing, Gobineau writes that he cannot recommend this affair to Prokesch-Osten enough, "for I fear that my book i.e. Religions et Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale, by calling attention to Mirzá Husayn-'Alí and His followers, had something to do with their persecution. I feel obligated by my conscience".

In the writings of those European diplomats acquainted with the situation, the motives for the exile of Bahá'u'lláh and His followers from Adrianople to 'Akká are portrayed as essentially political rather than religious in nature. The Ottoman officials recognized that both the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, in upholding the sovereignty of the Imámate, denied the legitimacy of the Caliphate. The misgivings of these officials were exacerbated by various unfounded accusations made by Siyyid Muḥammad-i-Iṣfáhání and Áqá Ján Big concerning Bahá'u'lláh's intentions. Without bothering to examine these charges seriously,<sup>72</sup> the Sublime Porte removed what it considered a disquieting influence in an already unstable area to "a less dangerous point."

Various members of the diplomatic community in Turkey--above all the Austrian ambassador to the Sublime Porte, Anton Graf Prokesch von Osten--intervened in an attempt to have this edict rescinded. Yet, despite his great influence at the Court of the Sultán and his deep personal friendship with 'Alí Páshá, the Grand Vizir, Prokesch-Osten was unable to have the famán banning the Bahá'ís to 'Akká, the "Bastille of the Middle East," withdrawn.

As prophecies going back as far as the Old Testament had foreseen, the King of Glory would attain the Holy Land.

"All these promises were fulfilled; it is difficult to understand how Bahá'u'lláh could have been obliged to leave Persia and to pitch His tent in this Holy Land, but for the persecution of His enemies, His banishment and exile." 'Abdu'l-Bahá<sup>73</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> See Anton Prokesch-Osten, Geschichte des Abfalls der Griechen, 5 vols, (Vienna: C. Gerold's Sohn, 1867) and Henry Kissinger, A World Restored: The Politics of Conservatism in a Revolutionary Age, (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1964), pp. 286 et seq.

<sup>2</sup> Prokesch to Julius Schneller. Quoted in Julius Schneller, Hinterlassene Werke, hrg Ernst Münch, (Leipzig: Hallberger's Buchhandlung, 1834-42), vol. II, p. 313; and Friedrich Engel-Janosi, Die Jugendzeit des Grafen Prokesch von Osten, (Innsbruck: Universitäts-Verlag Wagner, 1938), p. 54.

<sup>3</sup> Cf H. M. Balyuzi, Muhammad and the Course of Islám, (Oxford: George Ronald, 1976), pp. 414 and 418f; and Philip K. Hitti, History of the Arabs, (London: Maxmillan & Co Ltd, 1956), pp. 722ff.

<sup>4</sup> Lawrence Ross Beaber, "Prokesch von Osten and Austria's Balkan Policy, 1860-1872," (Ph.d. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1973), p. 2. Upon Prokesch's suggestion, Metternich intervened with the Sultán to have the cause of the feud, Admiral Khusraw Páshá, dismissed. Cf Anton Berger, Prokesch-Osten: Ein Leben aus Altösterreich, (Graz: Verlag Ulr. Mosers Buchhandlung, 1921), p. 62.

<sup>5</sup> Prokesch visited 'Akká in 1829. 'Abdu'lláh Páshá, the Governor of 'Akká, had desecrated the Austrian flag flying on the consulate there. Prokesch forced him to make restitutions for this abuse. Cf ibid., p. 64.

<sup>6</sup> Beaber, op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> Published by Ambruster in 1829, this book was very well received by the orientalist of the day.

<sup>8</sup> As a result of his researches, Prokesch-Osten was invited to join the Institute of Archeological Correspondence in Rome as well as the Imperial Academies of Science in Vienna and Berlin.

<sup>9</sup> Published by Gerold's in 1831.

<sup>10</sup> It is interesting to note that the papal Swiss Guard was created in response to a suggestion made by Prokesch-Osten at that time.

<sup>11</sup> Hitti, op. cit., p. 725.

<sup>12</sup> Kissinger, op.cit., p. 335, calls Prokesch-Osten "the Austrian diplomat best acquainted with the Ottoman Empire" and "Metternich's expert on the Eastern question".

<sup>13</sup> Beaber, op.cit., p. 3.

<sup>14</sup> Prokesch-Osten, who was elected President of the Diet, was instrumental in convincing Frederick Wilhelm IV not to accept the imperial crown offered him by the Diet. In October 1850, when the tension between Austria and Prussia was at its height, Prokesch-Osten disregarded instructions from the Austrian Foreign Minister amounting to a declaration of war and, together with the Prussian envoy Manteuffel, laid the foundation for the Olmütz settlement. For his services at Frankfurt, he received the Großkreuz of the Leopoldsorden from Emperor Francis Joseph.

<sup>15</sup> Diary of Prokesch-Osten, 10 July 1854, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Vienna, Nachlaß Prokesch-Osten. Also quoted in Friedrich Engel-Janosi, "Der Briefwechsel Gobineaus mit Prokesch-Osten", Mitteilungen des österreichischen Instituts für Geschichtsforschung, XLVIII, 1934, p. 457.

<sup>16</sup> Diary of Prokesch-Osten, close of 1854. Also quoted ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Collected in Clément Serpeille de Gobineau (ed), Correspondance entre le Comte de Gobineau et le Comte de Prokesch-Osten (1854-1876), (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1933).

<sup>18</sup> Although normally reserved to Vatican envoys, this was the traditional title of the Austrian plenipotentiary to the Sublime Porte, as he also represented the interests of the Vatican at the Sultán's court for many years. Cf Beaber, op.cit., p. 1, and literature cited there.

<sup>19</sup> Prokesch-Osten was born in Graz on 10 December 1795.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 5. He was appointed as a result of his successful mediation during the Vienna Conference, which was called to find a compromise solution to the Crimean War. Prokesch-Osten informed Beust, that the prospect of negotiating with "wise 'Alí the Grand Vizier, instead of with Bismarck at Frankfurt, seemed to him like an Oriental vision of the blessed." Friedrich Engel-Janosi, "Austria in the Summer of 1870," Journal of Central European Affairs, 7, April 1947, p. 342.

21 "Almost from the time of the Congress of Vienna, the maintenance of the status quo in the Balkans, more precisely the preservation of European Turkey as long as possible, had been a cardinal principle of Habsburg foreign policy. This was in fact a corollary to Austrian rivalry with imperial Russia, where Turkey had long been viewed as the primary obstacle in Russia's southward expansion."

Hugo Hantisch, Die Geschichte Österreichs: 1848-1918, (Graz: Verlag Styria, 1953), pp. 425f. Translated in Beaber, op.cit., p. 6. See also Kissinger, op.cit., pp. 288-291. This policy changed, however, as Beust became Minister of Foreign Affairs. He viewed the Balkans primarily as an area in which to make concessions to France and Russia in return for support of his German policy.

22 "I loathe the vulgarity (l'esprit canaille) which rules Europe today with my entire being. I believe that we are approaching with giant steps that barbarism which is rising to meet us out of the decay of civilization." Prokesch-Osten to Gobineau, 5 December 1860, in Gobineau, op.cit., p. 218. "Nothing is equal to Asia." Gobineau to Prokesch-Osten, 7 September 1856, ibid., p. 104. Cf Engel-Janosi, "Briefwechsel," pp. 457f.

23 Beaber, op.cit., p. 5.

24 Ibid.

25 Hübner, the Austrian minister in Paris, had dealt with 'Alí Páshá in the course of the international conference in Paris in 1856. Cf Alexander von Hübner, Neun Jahre der Erinnerung eines österreichischen Botschafters in Paris unter dem zweiten Kaiserreich, (Berlin: Gebr. Patet, 1904), vol. I, p. 243. Even Beust was favorably impressed by 'Alí Páshá. Cf Friedrich Engel-Janosi, "Summer of 1870", p. 342.

26 As quoted in Berger, op.cit., p. 109.

27 Although Prokesch-Osten and Gobineau referred to both the teachings and the exiles in Adrianople as "Babys," this report will refer to the exiles as Bahá'ís, for such they were. The spelling of Oriental names in the sources quoted has, as far as possible, been changed to conform with the system approved by Shoghi Effendi.

28 Prokesch-Osten to Gobineau, 5 January 1866, in Gobineau, op.cit., p. 287.

29 Diary of Prokesch-Osten, 6 January 1866.



<sup>30</sup> Prokesch-Osten to Gobineau, 10 January 1866, in Gobineau, op.cit., pp 288f.

<sup>31</sup> Diary of Prokesch-Osten, 8 January 1866.

<sup>32</sup> Prokesch-Osten, a meticulous person, recorded in the back of his diaries the letters which he wrote, along with their dates, recipients (including city), and a note of their contents. This entry thus reads "10 Jan, Camerloher, Anfrage wegen Bab, Adrianople." In addition, he often noted the date of the letter to which he was responding.

<sup>33</sup> Camerloher was born in Liedolsheim in Bavaria in 1825. He received Austrian citizenship simultaneously with his appointment as Austrian consul in Adrianople, on 31 October 1859. He was knighted for services to the Imperial crown on 1 November 1869. Following the discovery that he was embezzling official funds, he was suspended on 3 December 1874. He died shortly thereafter, on 29 June 1875.

<sup>34</sup> Camerloher to Prokesch-Osten, 14 January 1866, Nachlaß Prokesch-Osten, Consular & Diplom. Correspondenz 1864-1871, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Vienna.

<sup>35</sup> According to Adib Taherzadeh, The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, Vol II: Adrianople 1863-1868, (Oxford: George Ronald, 1977), p. 63, He was known as "Shaykh Effendi."

<sup>36</sup> The House of Amru'lláh.

<sup>37</sup> Actually, Bahá'u'lláh was 49 at the time. The report was obviously written before the attempt on Bahá'u'lláh's life and the open rebellion of Mirzá Yahyá, which, as Shoghi Effendi states, "visibly aged Him."

<sup>38</sup> An eyewitness account--cited in Martha Root, "A Visit to Adrianople," Bahá'í World, Vol V 1932-1939, (New York: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1936), pp 581 et sec.--also mentions that the Persians owned "beautiful Arabian horses and two donkeys."

<sup>39</sup> Cited in H. M. Balyuzi, Bahá'u'lláh: The King of Glory, (Oxford: George Ronald, 1980), chapters 27-29.

40 Contained in Korrespondenz mit H. Bulwer, Nachlaß Prokesch-Osten, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Vienna. Sir Henry Bulwer was the British minister to the Sublime Porte from 1858 to 1867 (See Almanace de Gotha: Annuaire Diplomatique et Statistique, (Gotha: Justus Perthes)). London and Vienna had as a common bond their mutual distrust of imperial Russian expansionism. Furthermore, it was Britain, with her industry and her navy, that had the power to speak with a decisive voice in any Balkan crisis. This power, along with their similar interests, lead to the common Anglo-Austrian front in questions concerning the Balkans, which lasted until the advent of the Anglo-German antagonism in the early twentieth century. Cf Beaber, op.cit., passim. However, it is obvious from their correspondence that Prokesch-Osten and Bulwer were bound by ties of friendship based on common philosophical convictions as well as those of a common policy.

41 Contained in Korrespondenz mit Alex. v. Warsberg, Nachlaß Prokesch-Osten. Raised in Graz, as was Prokesch-Osten, Warsberg was regarded as one of the leading German-language poets of the time, as well as a close friend of the Empress Elisabeth.

42 Gobineau, op.cit., p. 320n.

43 For example, the letter dated 28 August 1868, in which he describes his intervention on behalf of Bahá'u'lláh, as well as those dated 23 June and 11 December 1869; 20 April, 1 November and 2 December 1870; etc. Cf Engel-Janosi, "Briefwechsel," pp. 456ff.

44 Cf Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1970), chap. X.

45 Cf Balyuzi, Bahá'u'lláh, p. 252.

46 Fu'ád Páshá had taken over the duties of Foreign Minister from 'Alí Páshá in 1867.

47 Ibid., p. 254. These accusations were made by Siyyid Muḥammad-i-Iṣfahání and Áqá Ján Big. The situation in the Balkans at that time was extremely unstable, which explains the reaction of 'Alí Páshá and Fu'ád Páshá. In the summer of 1868, the Russians were smuggling arms on a large scale to the Serbians through the Danubian Principalities, two provinces of European Turkey, and the local officials were unable to stop it. The ruler of Serbia, an Ottoman province which bordered on the Austrian Empire, had just been assassinated, and civil war was threatening to break out there between the rival clans of the Karageorgevichs and the Obrenovichs. In Montenegro, an uprising had been bloodily quelled by Turkish troops in 1863; an uneasy peace was barely being maintained there. Furthermore, tensions were running high between the Muslim Turks and the Christians in Bulgaria, who were being incited and supported by the Russians. Agents from these various factions were operating through European Turkey.

<sup>48</sup> According to a Tablet purported to be from 'Abdu'l-Bahá, "our honored Lord and Master (Shaykh Husayn 'A.) and two (of His?) brothers, along with one other and two enemies of the Shaykh." The two brothers of Bahá'u'lláh were Mírzá Músá and Mírzá Muḥammad-Qulí the other, Darvísh Şidq-'Alí, and the two enemies, Siyyid Muḥammad-i-Isfahání and Aqá Ján Big. Cf Taherzadeh, op.cit., pp 402 and 408f.

<sup>49</sup> See Balyuzi, Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 456ff, where the sources are quoted in full.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., pp. 456f.

<sup>51</sup> Quoted ibid., p. 256.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 457, Balyuzi reports that a copy of this appeal, "eight lines written in Turkish with a signature and seal both reading Ḥusayn-'Alí," was found in the archives of the French Foreign Office. The handwriting, however, is not that of Bahá'u'lláh or of His amanuenses.

<sup>53</sup> Until the text of Camerloher's letter to Prokesch-Osten is found, it will not be known what these reasons were. Although the Bahá'ís were not turned over "to an agent of the Sháh" in Gallipoli, as Blunt and Camerloher expressed it in their telegrams, it is a fact that Ḥájí Mírzá Ḥusayn Khán-i-Qazvíní, the Persian ambassador to the Sublime Porte, issued "telegraphic and written instructions" that the injunctions of the farmán be carried out to the letter, and appointed a representative in 'Akká to insure that these orders were obeyed. These actions are clearly interference in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire, and thus a certain confirmation of Camerloher's fears. The Ambassador further informed the Persian consuls in 'Iraq and Egypt that the Porte had withdrawn its protection from the Bahá'ís.

<sup>54</sup> Balyuzi, Bahá'u'lláh, p. 458. The statement that the "Baron is personally acquainted with the Shek" seems at the present stage of research to be an exaggeration. Prokesch-Osten's index of correspondence shows the receipt of a letter from Camerloher dated 10 August, which is unfortunately not to be found among his papers. No mention is made of a telegram.

<sup>55</sup> Prokesch-Osten to Camerloher, 19 August 1868.

<sup>56</sup> From his other writings, it is evident that Prokesch-Osten is thinking here of the atrocities committed by the Greeks during their war of independence which were never reported in the European press, although the Turkish atrocities were given wide coverage, as well as those which had taken place in Rumania--he expressly mentions Bratiano (or Bratianu), the Minister-President of Rumania.

57 Gobineau to Prokesch-Osten, 25 August 1868, in Gobineau, op.cit., p. 332.

58 Diary of Prokesch-Osten, 24 August 1868. He further records in his diary that he visited 'Alí-Páshá on 16 August and Elliot, the British minister, Bourée, the French minister, and Ignatief, the Russian minister on 24 August. Elliot visited Prokesch-Osten on 20 August. It is probable that the situation of the Bahá'ís were discussed during these meetings.

59 Gobineau to Prokesch-Osten, 31 August 1868, in Gobineau, op.cit., p. 333.

60 The extortion of money from Hájí Abdu'l-Qásim-i-Shírází, the arrest and exile of Hájí Mírzá Haydar-'Alí along with six further Bahá'ís, and the imprisonment of Nabíl-i-A'zam. See Shoghi Effendi op.cit., p. 178, Balyuzi, Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 265ff and A. Q. Faizi (trans), Stories from the Delight of Hearts, The Memoirs of Hájí Mírzá Haydar-'Alí, (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 1980) pp. 29ff.

61 Camerloher to Prokesch-Osten, 22 August 1868.

62 Camerloher to Prokesch-Osten, 12 September 1868.

63 Camerloher also noted that Khurshíd Páshá had been absent from Adrianople for the past four weeks, on an "inspection tour in bulgaricis," i.e. Bulgarian affairs.

64 Taherzadeh, op.cit., pp. 408f.

65 Ibid., p. 402.

66 This would support the conjecture made by Taherzadeh (p. 403) that the exiles were first informed of their final destination following their arrival in Gallipoli.

67 Thus it would seem that this letter was written between 17 and 20 August 1868.

68 Balyuzi, Bahá'u'lláh, p. 257; and Taherzadeh, op.cit., pp. 404ff.

69 Gobineau to Prokesch-Osten, 18 November 1868, in Gobineau, op.cit., pp. 336f.

70 The description is very similar to that given in the "Tablet to the Sulṭán of Turkey," quoted in Horace Holley (ed), Bahá'í Scriptures: Selections from the Utterances of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, (New York: Bretano's, 1923, pp. 81ff.

71 Prokesch-Osten had obviously written of Fu'ád Páshá's allegation in one of his letters not contained in their published correspondence. See note <sup>43</sup>, supra.

72 Various notables in Constantinople had counseled Bahá'u'lláh "to state Your case, and to demand justice." 'Abdu'l-Bahá quotes Bahá'u'lláh's response as follows: "If the enlightened minded leaders /of your country/ be wise and diligent, they will certainly make enquiry, and acquaint themselves with the true state of the case; if not, then /their/ attainment of the truth is impracticable and impossible. Under these circumstances what need is there for importuning statesmen and supplicating ministers of the Court?" A Traveller's Narrative Written to Illustrate the Episode of the Báb, (Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1975), p. 92. Bahá'u'lláh, while in Constantinople, had ignored the customs of court life, which had also served to prejudice various Ottoman officials against Him.

73 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Some Answered Questions, (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1970), p. 38.