

## 7. ANTON GRAF PROKESCH VON OSTEN – ‘WORTHY REPRESENTATIVE OF EUROPE’\*

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REPRESENTATIVES of several European governments, including Austria, have intervened with Iranian authorities in recent years on behalf of the followers of the Bahá’í religion. The persecution suffered by the Bahá’ís under the current régime in Írán, and the subsequent diplomatic démarches, have received extensive media coverage. Concern on the part of European powers is not, however, unique to our times: diplomats from many of the same countries which have made official representations concerning the present situation facing the Bahá’ís in Írán, attempted to protect Bahá’u’lláh and His followers from the autocratic power of the Persian and Ottoman Imperial governments during the nineteenth century.

In 1852, three youths made an abortive attempt on the life of Násirí’d-Dín Sháh. This incident gave the Sháh an excuse to imprison Bahá’u’lláh with the intent of silencing Him. Bahá’u’lláh’s innocence in the matter was clearly established, but He and His family were nevertheless banished from Persia.<sup>1</sup> Although the Russian Minister in Tíhrán, Prince Dolgorukov, extended an offer of asylum in his country, Bahá’u’lláh chose to go to Baghdád whereupon the Prince provided an escort for the journey from Persia to ‘Íraq.

Other offers of aid include that of British citizenship made by Colonel Sir Arnold Burrows Kemball, representative of the British crown in Baghdád on the occasion of Bahá’u’lláh’s subsequent transfer to Constantinople in 1863; and repeated remonstrations addressed to the French and Ottoman

governments on Bahá’u’lláh’s behalf by Arthur Comte de Gobineau, French diplomat in Tíhrán and Athens.

Anton Graf Prokesch von Osten, Austrian ambassador to the Sublime Porte, stands out among the members of the diplomatic corps. Records in the Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv in Vienna reveal that Prokesch-Osten interceded with the Ottoman authorities on behalf of Bahá’u’lláh in order to have the edict banishing Him and His adherents from Turkey to the notorious penal colony of ‘Akká in Palestine withdrawn.

Anton Prokesch’s adult life was spent in the service of the Austrian Empire. Influenced by his experiences during the course of the French occupation of Styria in his youth, as well as by his ‘enlightened’ education, he abandoned his law studies at the age of eighteen to join an Austrian regiment fighting Napoleon’s troops. After receiving several decorations for bravery, he was promoted to the General Staff, and soon rose to the position of adjutant to Prince Karl zu Schwarzenberg, victor of the Battle of Leipzig. Prokesch found army service confining and unsatisfactory following Schwarzenberg’s death and requested a transfer to the Austrian navy, which was granted in 1824.

Prokesch made his first acquaintance with the Orient as a result of this transfer, for the Austrian navy’s mission at that time was to protect the interests of Austrian merchants in the Levant who were enmeshed in the Greek war of independence.<sup>2</sup> However, Prokesch’s early enthusiasm for the Greek cause, which had grown out of an interest in German romanticism and a sense of identification with Byron, soon withered; he wrote a former professor that, precisely because he loved Greece, the sight of the

\* This is the revised version of an article published in the *Mitteilungen des österreichischen Staatsarchivs*, no. 40, 1990. I wish to thank the editors of that journal for their kind permission to publish the article here.

<sup>1</sup> Cf Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* (Wilmette: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1970), pp. 66 *et seq.*, and H. M. Balyuzi, *Bahá’u’lláh, The King of Glory* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1980), chapters 15 and 19.

<sup>2</sup> Cf 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), 286 *et seq.*

Greeks who presently populated that sacred ground filled him with such pain.<sup>1</sup>

His reports showed such insight into 'Oriental affairs' that, when rising tensions between Muḥammad-ʿAlī Páshá, Viceroy of Egypt, and the Sublime Porte<sup>2</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. He was able to enhance Austria's standing in the Near East by mediating the settlement of a long-standing feud between the Viceroy and the Ottoman Sulṭan, Maḥmud II.<sup>3</sup>

As a result of his successful mission to Egypt, Prokesch was appointed Chief of the Eastern Mediterranean section of the Austrian navy's General Staff. Following the termination of the Greek war of independence, Prokesch was ordered to return to Vienna, arriving in February 1830. The success of his campaign against pirates in the area, during which he sank thirty-six pirate vessels with only two Austrian warships at his command, earned him the *Leopoldsorden* and knighthood. He took the surname 'of the East' at this juncture: Anton Ritter Prokesch von Osten.<sup>4</sup> The first of his numerous works on the Orient, which clearly express his love for the East, were published at this time: *Erinnerungen aus Aegypten und Kleinasien*;<sup>5</sup> *Das Land zwischen den Katarakten des Nil*, which included the results of his painstaking research on Egyptian antiquities and the first astronomically determined map of Nubia,<sup>6</sup> and

*Die Reise in's heilige Land im Jahre 1829*.<sup>7</sup>

Prokesch-Osten returned to Egypt as the Austrian envoy to the Viceroy's court in 1833, following Muḥammad-ʿAlī Páshá's conquest of Syria. His instructions were to join the British envoy in attempting to convince the Viceroy to reduce his demands upon Sulṭan Maḥmud II. The damage caused by Muḥammad-ʿAlī Páshá's Syrian campaign had nearly given the *coup de grâce* to the entire Ottoman Empire<sup>8</sup> and had therefore 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—the respite for the Sublime Porte proved to be temporary.

Once Prokesch-Osten returned from Egypt, he was viewed in Austria and Germany as the leading specialist in Oriental affairs due to his diplomatic activities, as well as to his careful research on Egyptian, Greek and Etruscan antiquities.<sup>9</sup> His next appointment, therefore, was to the unfilled post of minister to Greece, in which capacity he spent fifteen years working to bring a stable, viable government to power.<sup>10</sup> During this period, Prokesch-Osten was ennobled, receiving the title of Baron (*Freiherr*).

Prokesch-Osten was recalled in 1849 and appointed envoy, first to the Prussian court in Berlin, and later to the *Deutsche Bundestag* (the German federal Diet) at Frankfurt. Here he found himself pitted against Otto von Bismarck as Austria and Prussia vied for mastery of the German Confederation.<sup>11</sup>

While in Frankfurt, Prokesch-Osten first met

<sup>1</sup> Prokesch to Julius Schneller. Cf Julius Schneller, *Hinterlassene Werke*, hrg. Ernst Münch, vol. 2 (Leipzig: Hallberger's Buchhandlung, 1836), p. 313; and Friedrich Engel-Janosi, *Die Jugendzeit des Grafen Prokesch von Osten* (Innsbruck: Universitäts-Verlag Wagner, 1938), p. 54.

<sup>2</sup> Cf H. M. Balyuzi, *Muḥammad and the Course of Islām* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1976), pp. 414 and 418–9; and Philip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, 6th ed. (London: Macmillan, 1956), pp. 722 *et seq.*

<sup>3</sup> Lawrence Ross Beaber, 'Prokesch von Osten and Austria's Balkan Policy 1860–1872' (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1973), p. 2. At Prokesch's suggestion, Metternich intervened with the Sulṭan to have the cause of the feud, Admiral Khusrav Páshá, dismissed. Cf Anton Berger, *Prokesch-Osten: Ein Leben aus Altösterreich* (Graz: Verlag Ulr. Mosers Buchhandlung, 1921), p. 62.

<sup>4</sup> Beaber, 'Prokesch von Osten', p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> 'Memories from Egypt and Asia Minor', published by Armbruster in 1829, was well received by the orientalists of the day.

<sup>6</sup> 'The Land between the Cataracts of the Nile' was published in 1831. As a result of his findings, Prokesch-Osten was invited to join the Institute of Archaeological Correspondence in Rome as well as the Imperial Academies of Science in Vienna and Berlin. Cf Berger, *Prokesch-Osten*, p. 63.

<sup>7</sup> 'The Journey to the Holy Land in 1829' was published by Gerold's in 1831. Prokesch visited 'Akká during this journey and forced 'Abdu'llāh Páshá, the Governor of 'Akká who had desecrated the flag flying above the Austrian consulate, to make restitution. Cf Berger, *Prokesch-Osten*, p. 64.

<sup>8</sup> Hitti, *History*, p. 725.

<sup>9</sup> Kissinger calls Prokesch-Osten 'the Austrian diplomat best acquainted with the Ottoman Empire' and 'Metternich's expert on the Eastern question' (*World Restored*, p. 335).

<sup>10</sup> Beaber, 'Prokesch von Osten', p. 3.

<sup>11</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 his Foreign Minister tantamount 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 Franz Josef I.

Arthur Comte de Gobineau, recording in his diary: 'Every evening with Comte Gobineau and his wife from Martinique.'<sup>1</sup> In the summary with which he closed his diary entries for the year 1854, Prokesch-Osten noted, '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>2</sup> Prokesch-Osten's correspondence with Gobineau, which began at this time, lasted until the former's death in 1876.<sup>3</sup>

Austria's foreign policy concerning the Ottoman Empire was vitally important since the course of the Danube River—the aorta of the Austrian monarchy, as Radetzky had styled it—flowed through Ottoman territory to empty into the Black Sea. With this in mind, Austria endeavoured to strengthen the Ottoman Empire against the encroachment of Imperial Russia, and, during the second half of the nineteenth century, against the rising tide of nationalism in the Balkans.<sup>4</sup>

His background made Anton Freiherr Prokesch von Osten a natural choice for *internuncio*<sup>5</sup> of the Austrian Empire to the Sublime Porte. His appointment in 1855—at the age of sixty<sup>6</sup>—was both the culmination of a life of service to the Austrian Empire and the fulfillment of a long-cherished desire.<sup>7</sup> The legation in Con-

stantinople 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.

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 for the Orient. He shared with Gobineau the feeling that European civilization was decaying, and that a wave of renewal sweeping westward out of the uncorrupted Middle East offered the only possibility of reversing the ever-increasing decadence of Europe,<sup>8</sup> a conviction reflecting the fascination he had felt for Ottoman customs and institutions since the Greek war of independence.<sup>9</sup> Although he clearly saw the signs of political disintegration within the Ottoman Empire, Prokesch-Osten's belief in Ottoman strength and potential was a constant theme in his actions and reports throughout his term of service in Constantinople.<sup>10</sup>

This term ended in 1872, when Prokesch-Osten resigned his diplomatic post and retired from public life. The death of 'Ālī Pāshā, a statesman whom he revered, on 7 September 1871, had been the final factor in his decision.<sup>11</sup> At the ceremony in which Prokesch-Osten tendered his formal resignation, Emperor Franz Josef I elevated him to the hereditary rank of count (*Graf*), as Berger has it, in order that it

<sup>1</sup> Diary entry, 10 July 1854. Nachlass Prokesch-Osten, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Vienna (hereafter HHStA). Also quoted in Friedrich Engel-Janosi, 'Der Briefwechsel Gobineaus mit Prokesch-Osten', *Mitteilungen des österreichischen Instituts für Geschichtsforschung* 48 (1934), p. 457.

<sup>2</sup> Diary entry, close of 1854. Nachlass Prokesch-Osten, HHStA. Also quoted *ibid*.

<sup>3</sup> Partially collected in *Correspondance entre le Comte de Gobineau et le Comte de Prokesch-Osten (1854–1876)*, ed. Clément Serpeille de Gobineau (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1933).

<sup>4</sup> '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 for 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. 425–26. Translated in Beaber, 'Prokesch von Osten', p. 6. See also Kissinger, *World Restored*, pp. 288–91. 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.

<sup>5</sup> Although normally reserved for Vatican envoys, this was the traditional title of the Austrian plenipotentiary to the Sublime Porte, who had also represented the interests of the Vatican at the Sultān's court for many years. Cf Beaber, 'Prokesch von Osten', p. 1, and literature cited therein.

<sup>6</sup> Prokesch-Osten was born in Graz on 10 December 1795.

<sup>7</sup> Beaber, 'Prokesch von Osten', p. 5. He was appointed as a result of his successful mediation during the Vienna Conference, which had been convened to find a compromise solution to the Crimean War. Prokesch-Osten informed Beust that the prospect of negotiation with 'wise 'Āli, 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.

<sup>8</sup> 'L'esprit canaille, qui a la haute main en Europe, me dégoûte jusqu'aux entrailles. Je crois que nous marchons à pas de géant vers la barbarie la plus hideuse, résultant de la pourriture de la civilisation.' Prokesch-Osten to Gobineau, 5 December 1860, *Correspondance*, p. 218. Cf Engel-Janosi, 'Briefwechsel', pp. 457–58.

<sup>9</sup> Beaber, 'Prokesch von Osten', p. 5.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>11</sup> Alexander Freiherr von Hübner, the Austrian minister in Paris, who had dealt with 'Ālī Pāshā during the course of the international conference held there in 1856, also thought highly of him. Cf Alexander von Hübner, *Neun Jahre der Erinnerung eines österreichischen Botschafters in Paris unter dem zweiten Kaiserreich*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Gebr. Patel, 1904), p. 243. Even Beust had been favorably impressed by 'Ālī Pāshā. Cf Engel-Janosi, 'Summer of 1870', p. 342.



be recognized with what regret the Emperor let him leave the diplomatic service.<sup>1</sup> During his final audience with the Sultán, he was awarded the Order of Osmaniè with diamonds for his services to the Ottoman Empire, and, as the steamer carrying him away from Constantinople rounded the Golden Horn, the cannons ashore fired a parting salute.

Following his retirement from diplomatic service, Prokesch-Osten collected material for his memoirs—which were 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 while reading a manuscript of Gobineau's book *Religions et Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale*.<sup>2</sup> He expressed his favorable impression of the teachings of the Báb in a letter to Gobineau dated 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, know nothing of it. I heard of it from you.'

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 doctrine, 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 states that 'the teaching with regard to the prophets pleases me infinitely, as it is conciliatory and completely excludes all fanaticism'.<sup>3</sup>

During a dinner which Prokesch-Osten gave at his residence on 6 January of the same year he learned from a guest that Bahá'u'lláh, 'the present-day Báb', was interned in Adrianople.<sup>4</sup>

He records in his diary that this guest, Comte Rochechouard, the French *chargé d'affaires* in Tíhrán, 'spoke a great deal about Bábism'.<sup>5</sup>

Prokesch-Osten broached the subject of the 'Báb' [Bahá'u'lláh] and the 'Bábí' religion at his next audience with 'Álī Páshá on 8 January, and recorded that 'Álī Páshá spoke of Bahá'u'lláh as 'a man of great distinction, exemplary conduct, great moderation, and extremely dignified demeanor'; he expressed the opinion that the Bahá'í teachings deserved great respect as they 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 the concept of eternal punishment. From a political point of view, however, he maintained that these doctrines were unacceptable both in Persia and in Turkey, as they upheld the sovereignty of the Imámate. 'Álī Páshá added that this view was the origin of the centuries-long dispute between the Shi'ís and the Sunnis, but noted at the same time that the Shi'í government in Persia had since abandoned the position which the Bahá'ís were now championing.<sup>6</sup>

Prokesch-Osten, intrigued by all that he had heard and read, directed a query regarding 'the Báb'<sup>7</sup> to the Austrian consul in Adrianople,

<sup>5</sup> Diary entry, 6 January 1866.

<sup>6</sup> Diary entry, 8 January 1866, and Prokesch-Osten to Gobineau, 10 January 1866, *Correspondance*, pp. 288–89. The successorship of Muhammad constitutes a major difference between Shi'íh and Sunni Islám. The Shi'ís believe that Muhammad designated His son-in-law, 'Alí, to be the Imám, or leader, of His people. The Imamate was hereditary: each Imám was to appoint His successor from among Muhammad's lineal descendants. The Sunnis, on the other hand, uphold the Caliphs (from *khalifah*, meaning 'successor' or 'vice-gerent'). The first Caliphs were elected from among the companions of the Prophet, but the Caliphate soon became appointive, leading to the formation of dynasties. Cf. Dwight M. Donaldson, *The Shi'ite Religion: A History of Islam in Persia and Irak* (London: Luzac, 1933); Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'í Islam: The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shi'ism* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1985); and Balyuzi, *Muhammad and the Course of Islam*.

As the Bahá'í religion confirms the legitimacy of the Imámate, Ottoman officials felt that the Bahá'ís would deny the authority of the Caliphate. However, Bahá'u'lláh had charged His followers not to interfere in partisan politics and to render obedience to every just government. This would have precluded, according to Bahá'ís, the challenge to the Caliphate feared by Ottoman authorities.

<sup>7</sup> Prokesch-Osten, a meticulous person, recorded the letters which he wrote, along with their dates, recipients (including city), and a note concerning their contents, in the back of his diaries. 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>1</sup> Berger, *Prokesch-Osten*, p. 109.

<sup>2</sup> Prokesch-Osten to Gobineau, 29 December 1865, *Correspondance*, p. 285.

<sup>3</sup> Prokesch-Osten to Gobineau, 5 January 1866, *Correspondance*, p. 287.

<sup>4</sup> 'The present-day Báb': Bahá'u'lláh announced in 1863 that He was the Manifestation foretold by the Báb. The majority of the Bábís accepted Bahá'u'lláh's claim and gradually became known as 'Bahá'ís', i.e. followers of Bahá'u'lláh. Although Prokesch-Osten and Gobineau, following a widespread misconception, referred to the exiles in Adrianople as 'Babys', this paper will give them their correct name to avoid misunderstandings.

Gustav Wilhelm von Camerloher on 10 January.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, the text of this letter has not yet come to light.

Camerloher reports in his reply<sup>2</sup> that Bahá'u'lláh, commonly known in Adrianople as Anshad Effendi,<sup>3</sup> had been interned there 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 had been banished from that country due to his 'reformatory sectarian endeavours with strong Sunnî 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 a monthly allowance of 5,000 *rials* from the Ottoman government;<sup>4</sup> from his followers, all of whom live in the patriarchal house-hold, he receives the proceeds of their activities as tobacconists, dealers in carpets or antiquities, confectioners, carpenters, painters or lamp-lighters; and that this money is then shared with each according to his needs and merits. According to Camerloher, Bahá'u'lláh is 'barely thirty-six years of age',<sup>5</sup> yet he accepts the strongly Oriental homage paid 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 it is rumoured in the city that Bahá'u'lláh brought great riches with him to Adrianople, 'gold, precious stones and other valuables', but that he has had to sell many of them, 'particularly magnificent horses as well as a carpet at a price of 80,000 *rials*'. Camerloher closes by stating 'he is esteemed by everyone everywhere.'

Although the details concerning Bahá'u'lláh's age and wealth are erroneous, Camerloher's report basically agrees with the accounts of Áqá Ḥusayn-i-*Āshchí* and Áqá Muḥammad-Riḍáy-i-Qannád-i-*Shirází*, two of Bahá'u'lláh's adherents who resided in Adrianople at that time.<sup>6</sup> 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 generally viewed is obvious in that, although He was a Persian of *Shí'ih* background exiled amongst Sunnís, the report contains no negative information; in fact, Bahá'u'lláh is even attributed with Sunni tendencies, an apparent sign of the informants' approbation.

Prokesch-Osten wrote several letters to Europe regarding the Bahá'í religion: his letters to Sir Henry Bulwer<sup>7</sup> and Alexander Freiherr von Warsberg,<sup>8</sup> for example, attest to his admiration for both Bahá'u'lláh and His teachings. It has been impossible, however, to ascertain whether he communicated further with Gob-

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

<sup>2</sup> Camerloher to Prokesch-Osten, 14 January 1866, Nachlass Prokesch-Osten, Consular & Diplomat. Correspondenz 1864-1871, HHStA.

<sup>3</sup> The Kurds referred to Bahá'u'lláh as *Īshán* ('They') during His sojourn in Sulaymáníyyih, a name by which He was also known in Adrianople according to Rosenberg's reports, published in *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions 1844-1944: Some Contemporary Western Accounts*, ed. Moojan Momen (Oxford: George Ronald, 1981), pp. 194-97. Adib Taherzadeh states that He was known as 'Shaykh Effendi', in *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*, vol. 2, *Adrianople 1863-1868* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1977), p. 63.

<sup>4</sup> Momen notes in *Religions*, p. 188n, that 'this figure represents the sum of the monthly allowances payable to each member of Bahá'u'lláh's family and those exiled with Him.' 'Áli Páshá had informed Prokesch-Osten that the allowances were paid by the Persian government (diary entry, 8 January 1866).

<sup>5</sup> 'Barely thirty-six years of age' - Bahá'u'lláh was forty-nine at the time.

<sup>6</sup> Cited in Balyuzi, *Bahá'u'lláh*, chapters 27-29.

<sup>7</sup> Contained in Korrespondenz mit H. Bulwer, Nachlass Prokesch-Osten, HHStA. Sir Henry Bulwer was the British minister to the Sublime Porte from 1858 to 1867. London and Vienna had mutual distrust of Imperial Russian expansionism as a bond. Furthermore, it was Britain, with her industry and 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. Beaver, 'Prokesch von Osten', *passim*. However, it is obvious from their correspondence that Prokesch-Osten and Bulwer were bound by ties of friendship based on shared philosophical convictions as well as by those of a common policy.

<sup>8</sup> Contained in Korrespondenz mit Alex. v. Warsberg, Nachlass Prokesch-Osten, HHStA. Prokesch-Osten's friend since childhood, Warsberg was regarded as one of the leading German-language poets of the period. He was a close friend of the Empress Elisabeth as well, and accompanied her on her trips to the Orient.



ineau about the Bahá'ís, as their correspondence between October 1866 and May 1868 is missing.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, a comparison of the index of correspondence in Prokesch-Osten's diary with the published *Correspondance entre le Comte de Gobineau et le Comte de Prokesch-Osten* reveals that other letters which he addressed to Gobineau are also absent from that collection.<sup>2</sup>

It was during this eighteen-month period that events with grave consequences for the Bahá'í religion took place: one of Bahá'u'lláh's half-brothers, known as Şubḥ-i-Azal, contested Bahá'u'lláh's claim to be the Manifestation of God promised by the Báb, and advanced his own claim to that station. Although the great majority of the community loyally followed Bahá'u'lláh, the Bahá'ís feel that this open break, and the subsequent divisions that it caused among the followers of the Báb, weakened their community in the eyes of its enemies and emboldened them to move against it.<sup>3</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, which heightened the fears of such officials as were already concerned about the number of Bahá'ís in Adrianople.<sup>4</sup> In addition, erroneous stories about the deeds and plans of the Bahá'ís were circulated. One of these intimated that Bahá'u'lláh was involved with Bulgarian revolutionaries, which so alarmed Fu'ád Páshá, the Minister of Foreign Affairs,<sup>5</sup> that he pressed the Sulṭan to take action.<sup>6</sup> Thus, 'Abdu'l-'Azíz came to issue

a *farman* dated 26 July 1868 condemning Bahá'u'lláh and several of His followers to perpetual banishment in the penal colony of 'Akká (St. Jean d'Acre), stipulating their close confinement and forbidding them association with each other or with the local inhabitants.<sup>7</sup> The rationale for this drastic action was the accusation that the exiles had grievously erred and had also led others astray.

According to documents in the archives of the British Public Record Office, the Reverend Mr. Rosenberg, a Protestant missionary from Britain, had acquainted the foreign consuls in Adrianople, including Camerloher, with the plight of Bahá'u'lláh.<sup>8</sup> 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 and Boghos Agha [head of the local Protestant community] believe that they are adopted from the Holy Scripture, and this belief naturally excited their sympathy and zeal on behalf of the *Shaykh* [Bahá'u'lláh].' Furthermore, Blunt confirms the information that Camerloher had previously 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 [sic]'.<sup>9</sup>

Áqá Husayn-i-Áshchí relates in his account of that period:

'... 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>10</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Correspondance*, p. 320n.

<sup>2</sup> 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. 456–58.

<sup>3</sup> Cf Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, chapter 10.

<sup>4</sup> Cf Balyuzi, *Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 252.

<sup>5</sup> Fu'ád Páshá had taken over the Foreign Ministry from 'Alí Páshá in 1867.

<sup>6</sup> Balyuzi, *Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 254. These accusations are said to have originated with the followers of Şubḥ-i-Azal. Cf Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 179.

The extremely unstable situation in the Balkans during that period helps to explain 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 local authorities were unable to stop them. The ruler of the Ottoman province of Serbia, which bordered on the Austrian Empire, had just been assassinated, and civil war was threatening to break out between the rival clans of the Karageorgevichs and the Obrenovichs. An

uneasy peace was barely being maintained in Montenegro following an uprising which had been bloodily quelled by Turkish troops in 1863. Moreover, tensions were running high between the Muslim Turks and the Christian Bulgarians, who were also incited and supported by the Russians. Agents of all these factions were operating throughout European Turkey.

<sup>7</sup> Cf p.785, n.2 and Taherzadeh, *Revelation*, vol. 2, pp. 402 and 408–9.

<sup>8</sup> See Momen, *Religions*, chapter 11, where the sources are quoted in full.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Balyuzi, *Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 256.

According to this account, Bahá'u'lláh categorically declined their 'oft-repeated offer' of assistance. In an interview with a European living in Haifa some years later, 'Abdu'l-Bahá further clarified Bahá'u'lláh's stance:

'The European consuls in Adrianople offered to prevent [the banishment] but [Bahá'u'lláh] explained to them that if they thought it good to take steps on his behalf, they should do this without his petition and independently from him, but that he was decided to follow the decree of God. Thus he came to 'Akká.<sup>1</sup>

The descriptions found in the government archives of the European powers involved concerning the circumstances surrounding these offers differ somewhat from the above accounts. For example, in a dispatch dated 10 August to Elliot regarding this matter, Blunt enclosed an appeal for the protection of the British consulate, written in Turkish and said to be from Bahá'u'lláh, and reported that similar appeals had been addressed to Blunt's colleagues in Adrianople.<sup>2</sup> Recently discovered evidence, however, suggests that the initiative for petitioning consular protection may have come from within the Christian community in Adrianople.<sup>3</sup>

Camerloher apparently wished to discuss the situation and visited Blunt shortly after the latter had received this appeal. Blunt later reported that Camerloher, who had already submitted the case to his superior, Prokesch-Osten, had 'strong reasons' to believe that Bahá'u'lláh and his companions were to be delivered into the power of the Persian government.<sup>4</sup> As neither of the consuls felt that they could interfere officially without instructions, they sent telegrams to their

Embassies in Constantinople requesting guidance.<sup>5</sup>

The departure of the exiles did not take place as originally planned; Bahá'u'lláh refused to leave Adrianople until the debts which His agent had incurred in the bazaar were paid. Bahá'u'lláh and His followers finally departed Adrianople on 12 August, escorted by a Turkish captain, Hasan Effendi, and a squad of soldiers.

Although Camerloher's dispatch of 10 August is missing, Prokesch-Osten's papers contain a copy of his reply, dated 19 August. Here Prokesch-Osten maintains that when one divests the exile of the Bahá'is of 'incorrect alarms, (e.g., the surrender of the [Bahá'is] to the Persians or their interrogation by the *Shaykh*u'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, had spoken with Fu'ád Páshá, 'who is as enlightened as any European minister', about the Bahá'is and believes that Sir Henry had also done so. Bahá'u'lláh and his companions, Prokesch-Osten continues, are being banished to 'Akká, 'a less dangerous point', not because of their doctrines, but rather because of the 'divisive force inherent in every sect'. Such a force, he states, is especially dangerous in the Balkans, as 'certain agents, sprinkled over the entire European Turkey, have the crumbling away of the population in all directions as their objective'.

As further justification for his inability to intercede for the Bahá'is, Prokesch-Osten mentions the innumerable examples of intolerance toward dissension that Christian history—not

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in G[eorg] D[avid] Hardegg, 'Kurzer Abriß der Geschichte einer Sekte unter den Muhamedanern in Persien', *Süddeutsche Warte*, vol. 28, no. 29 (20 July 1871); English translation from Rev. Henry R. Coleman, *Light from the East: Travels and Researches in Bible Lands in Pursuit of More Light in Masonry* (Louisville, KY: by the author, 1890), pp. 347–49. Hardegg was the head of the German Temple Society colony in Haifa and the recipient of a Tablet revealed by Bahá'u'lláh.

<sup>2</sup> Balyuzi reports, *ibid.*, p. 457, that a copy of this appeal, 'eight lines written in Turkish with a signature and seal both reading Husayn-'Alí' was found in the archives of the French Foreign Office. The handwriting, however, is neither that of Bahá'u'lláh nor any of his amanuenses. 'Expert opinion on documents in Turkish states that they "were written by non-Turks and contain numerous mistakes of grammar and spelling. Some misspellings are of Arabic words, and this suggests that the scribes were non-Muslim, possibly Armenians"', *ibid.*, p. 257.

<sup>3</sup> Momen, *Religions*, pp. 192–97.

<sup>4</sup> It will not be known what these reasons were until the text of Camerloher's letter to Prokesch-Osten is found. Although

the Bahá'is were not turned over 'to an agent of the *Sháh*' in Gallipoli, as expressed by Blunt and Camerloher in their telegrams, it is known that Hájí Mirzá Husayn Khán-i-Qazvání, the Persian ambassador to the Sublime Porte, issued 'telegraphic and written instructions' that the injunctions of the *farman* be carried out to the letter, and appointed a representative in 'Akká to ensure that these orders were obeyed. These actions, clearly interference in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire, appear to confirm Camerloher's fears. The Ambassador further informed the Persian consuls in 'Irág and Egypt that the Porte had withdrawn its protection from the Bahá'is.

<sup>5</sup> Momen, *Religions*, pp. 189–90. The statement that the 'Baron [Prokesch-Osten] is personally acquainted with the *Shaykh* [Bahá'u'lláh]', contained in the report, appears 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.



only in the Middle Ages, but also in recent years—contains.<sup>1</sup> 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 indicates that he is familiar with the teachings of the Bahá'í religion:

'I know the teachings of the Bahá'ís [sic]. The naïve report of the Rev. Mr. Rosenberg proves that he knows nothing of them, and that he has the most peculiar illusions [regarding them]. In the teachings of the Bábís 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 mullá—and the latter is probably more likely.'<sup>2</sup>

Gobineau wrote Prokesch-Osten on 25 August to say that he had read of the 'incident', in the *Courrier d'Orient*, but did not agree with the Ottoman policy towards the Bahá'ís, 'who have requested their [Ottoman] support and are willing to become their subjects.' If the government persecutes the Bahá'ís, it will lose the special favour with which many Bahá'ís in the páshálik of Van and Baghdád, as well as the Bahá'ís in Persia, view it. This special favour could be 'a strong force opposed to the very aggressive disposition of the Qájár dynasty'. As the Bahá'ís very definitely require assistance, Gobineau believes they could receive it from the Russians, which would not be in Turkey's best interests. Gobineau notes in closing that he feels he is doing something useful for the Porte when he intervenes for 'the poor Bábís' and pleads for their protection.<sup>3</sup>

In spite of his rather brusque reply to Camerloher's dispatch, Prokesch-Osten records in his diary that he traveled to the Bosphorus for

another audience with Fu'ád Páshá on 24 August, 'mainly because of the Adrianople ban'.<sup>4</sup> His dispatch to Camerloher dated 12 August and the letter he wrote to Gobineau on 28 August, which describe his activities on behalf of Bahá'u'lláh and the Bahá'ís, are unavailable. However, Blunt, in his dispatch to Elliot dated 15 August, includes information which Camerloher, in turn, had provided regarding statements made by Fu'ád Páshá during this audience.<sup>5</sup>

Prokesch-Osten was apparently acting on his own behalf—not in his official capacity 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 concerning the Bahá'ís among 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 the Foreign Minister, Friedrich Freiherr von Beust—who considered the Near East to be of secondary importance—would neither understand the doctrines of Bahá'u'lláh nor be concerned about His persecution or that of His followers. Thus Prokesch-Osten was required as *internuncio* to issue instructions to his subordinate in Adrianople not to interfere in the matter, which must have been, at the very least, personally distasteful.

'I recognize you very well indeed in that which you did for the [Bahá'ís],' Gobineau responded on 31 August. 'I am delighted that there were exaggerations in the reports [concerning the treatment of the Bahá'ís], but I believe that Fu'ád is not fully informed.' Gobineau further reports that the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh are spreading rapidly amongst the 200,000 or 300,000 Persians living in the Ottoman Empire, and adds that the missionaries are 'imbéciles' if they believe that they can make an impression on 'the enthusiasm of the new faith'.

According to Gobineau, Bahá'u'lláh 'has turned to me several times with reports of per-

<sup>1</sup> It is evident from his other writings that Prokesch-Osten was thinking of the atrocities committed by the Greeks during their war of independence (never reported in the European press, although Turkish atrocities against the Greeks had been given wide coverage), as well as of recent atrocities in Rumania; he expressly mentions Bratiano (or Bratianu), the Minister-President of Romania.

<sup>2</sup> Prokesch-Osten to Camerloher, 19 August 1868, *Nachlass Prokesch-Osten, Consular & Diplomat, Correspondenz 1864–1871*, HHStA.

<sup>3</sup> Gobineau to Prokesch-Osten, 25 August 1868, *Correspondance*, p. 332.

<sup>4</sup> Diary entry, 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 was discussed during these meetings.

<sup>5</sup> Momen, *Religions*, p. 192.



secutions in Manṣūriyyah, Egypt, which were instigated by the Persian consul there'.<sup>1</sup> Gobineau states his conviction that the Sublime Porte has a very serious interest in this matter, and not only because the Bahá'is in Persia, if properly cultivated, could serve as a counterweight to the Qájárs.<sup>2</sup>

Gobineau enclosed a letter he had written to Bahá'u'lláh, not only describing the actions Prokesch-Osten had taken on Bahá'u'lláh's behalf but also attempting to reassure Him, and asked Prokesch-Osten to see that it was forwarded to Him. From Gobineau's letter it is clear that Prokesch-Osten had spoken with more than one member of the Ottoman government regarding Bahá'u'lláh.

Camerloher had responded to Prokesch-Osten's letter of 19 August on 22 August with a critique of the Ottoman policy regarding the Bahá'is very similar to that of Gobineau.<sup>3</sup> Prokesch-Osten must have admonished him that the parallels drawn by Camerloher between the government's treatment of the Bahá'is and its treatment of the Bulgarian Catholic Union were incorrect, for in a later dispatch dated 12 September Camerloher states that he was referring less to the concrete case of the Bahá'is than to the general consequences derived from Fu'ád Pásha's actions.<sup>4</sup> Camerloher reports in the latter dispatch that he has arranged for Gobineau's letter to Bahá'u'lláh to be delivered via Gallipoli, and encloses a photograph of Bahá'u'lláh, 'the noble-hearted martyr', characterizing the portrait as '*wohlgetroffen*' (a good likeness), which would imply that he had seen Him.

Another enclosure to Camerloher's dispatch was a German translation of a letter written in Turkish from 'Abbás Effendi, son of Husayn' [i.e., son of Bahá'u'lláh], to the Rev. Rosenberg. Camerloher had probably translated the letter himself as his knowledge of Turkish was one of the reasons cited for awarding him the post of Austrian consul.

According to this letter, the trip from Adrianople to Gallipoli required six days. When the Bahá'is arrived in Gallipoli they were met by a Turkish major who had brought a group of Bahá'is arrested in Constantinople.<sup>5</sup> The major carried an order banishing Bahá'u'lláh, two of His brothers and another of His followers, as well as two of His enemies, followers of Şubh-i-Azal, to 'Akká.<sup>6</sup> The remaining Bahá'is were to be taken to Constantinople and scattered in small groups among various fortresses throughout the Ottoman Empire. The Bahá'is replied to this threat of dispersal 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, and that they were 'in despair of their lives' as no answer had yet been received. It closes with the writer's acknowledgement of the Rev. Rosenberg's zeal and goodwill, and conveys Bahá'u'lláh's greetings to the Rev. Rosenberg, Boghos Effendi and Artin Effendi (another member of the local Armenian Protestant community), as well as the greetings of the writer and the other Bahá'is.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bahá'u'lláh 'has turned to me several times with reports of persecutions in Manṣūriyyah, Egypt, which were instigated by the Persian consul there'. For instance, the extortion of money from Hájí 'Abdu'l-Qásim-i-Shirázi, the arrest and exile of Hájí Mirzá Haydar-'Alí and six other Bahá'is to the Sudan, and the imprisonment of Nabil-i-Azm. See Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 178; Balyuzi, *Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 265–67; and *Stories from the Delight of Hearts: The Memoirs of Hájí Mirzá Haydar-'Alí*, trans. A. Q. Faizi (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 1980), pp. 29 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> Gobineau to Prokesch-Osten, 31 August 1868, *Correspondance*, p. 333.

<sup>3</sup> Camerloher to Prokesch-Osten, 22 August 1868, Nachlass Prokesch-Osten, Consular & Diplomat, Correspondenz 1864–1871, HHStA.

<sup>4</sup> Camerloher to Prokesch-Osten, 12 September 1868, Nachlass Prokesch-Osten, Consular & Diplomat, Correspondenz 1864–1871, HHStA. He also noted that Khurshid Pásha had been absent from Adrianople for the past four weeks on an 'inspection tour of *bulgaricis*', i.e., Bulgarian affairs.

<sup>5</sup> Among these prisoners were Mirzá 'Alí-i-Sayyáh, Míshkín-Qalam, Áqá 'Abdu'l-Ghaffár-i-Isfahání, Muḥammad-Baqir-i-Qahvih-chí, and Darvish Šidq-'Alí. Cf. Taherzadeh, *Revelation*, vol. 2, pp. 408–9.

<sup>6</sup> According to this letter from 'Abbás Effendi, son of Husayn', contained in Nachlass Prokesch-Osten, Consular & Diplomat, Correspondenz 1864–1871, HHStA: '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 Mirzá Músá and Mirzá Muḥammad-Qulí, the other Darvish Šidq-'Alí, and the two enemies, Siyyid Muḥammad-i-Isfahání and Áqá Ján Big.

<sup>7</sup> It cannot be ascertained whether 'Abbás Effendi 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. It would seem that this letter was written between 17 and 20 August 1868, which would support Taherzadeh's theory (*Revelation*, vol. 2, p. 403) that the exiles were first informed of their final destination following their arrival in Gallipoli.

The original order assigning the Bahá'ís various places of exile was eventually revoked; the authorities in Constantinople instead decided to send all of the Bahá'ís, with the exception of those specifically exiled to Cyprus in the original *farman*, to 'Akká. However, the Ottoman government agreed to pay passage only for those persons whose names appeared on their prisoner lists. Much to the surprise of the officials in Gallipoli, several Bahá'ís not included on the Ottoman registers came forward to pay their own passage on the Austrian Lloyd steamship which departed from Alexandria on 21 August 1868. In Alexandria, the exiles were transhipped to a second Austrian Lloyd steamer bound for Haifa, the port in Palestine closest to 'Akká.<sup>1</sup>

The final letter regarding Bahá'u'lláh's banishment to 'Akká which has come to light in the course of research was written by Gobineau to Prokesch-Osten on 18 November 1868. '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>2</sup>

Concerning the reasons for this exile, Gobineau writes that he is willing to believe Fu'ád Páshá, who had assured Prokesch-Osten that 'the money and 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.'<sup>3</sup> The missionaries' conjecture that the Bahá'ís wish to convert to Christianity is '*par trop ridicule*', he writes, '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.'

Gobineau states he is attempting to do what he can to help these unfortunates, '... but you know how much chance I have of being understood'. 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.

Gobineau emphasizes in closing 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.'

The motives for the exile of Bahá'u'lláh and his followers from Adrianople to 'Akká are portrayed in the writings of those European diplomats acquainted with the situation 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 Imamate, denied that the Caliphate was divinely ordained.<sup>4</sup> The misgivings of these officials were exacerbated by various accusations which followers of Şubh-i-Azal made concerning Bahá'u'lláh's intentions. Therefore, the Sublime Porte removed what it considered to be a disquieting influence in an already unstable area to 'a less dangerous point' without bothering to examine the charges seriously.<sup>5</sup>

The Austrian ambassador to the Sublime Porte, Anton Graf Prokesch von Osten, as well as several of his colleagues, intervened in an attempt to have the edict banishing Bahá'u'lláh and some of His followers to 'Akká, the 'Bastille

<sup>4</sup> See p.780, n.6.

<sup>5</sup> Various notables in Constantinople had counselled Bahá'u'lláh 'to state your case, and to demand justice'. Bahá'u'lláh's response is quoted 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*, trans. E. G. Browne, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1891), vol. 2, p. 92. Bahá'u'lláh ignored the customs of court life while in Constantinople, which is said to have prejudiced various Ottoman officials against Him (Balyuzi, *Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 197–99; Taherzadeh, *Revelation*, vol. 2, pp. 55–56).

<sup>1</sup> Cf Kent D. Beveridge, 'From Adrianople to 'Akká: The Austrian Lloyd', *Bahá'í Studies Bulletin*, vol. 4, no. 1 (March 1986) and sources cited therein.

<sup>2</sup> Gobineau to Prokesch-Osten, 18 November 1868, *Correspondance*, pp. 336–37. The description is very similar to that given in a second letter from 'Abbás Effendi to Rev. Rosenberg which is cited in Momen, *Religions*, pp. 205–6, as well as that contained in the 'Tablet to the Sultán of Turkey' quoted in *Bahá'í Scriptures: Selections from the Utterances of Bahá'u'lláh and Abdul Baha*, ed. Horace Holley (New York: Brentano's, 1923), pp. 81 *et seq.*

<sup>3</sup> Prokesch-Osten had obviously written of Fu'ád Páshá's statement in one of his letters not contained in their published correspondence (see p.781, n.8). Blunt's dispatch to Elliot (Momen, *Religions*, p. 192) shows that the assurance was given during the audience on 24 August.



of the Middle East', rescinded. Yet, despite his great influence at the Court of the Sulṭan and his deep personal friendship with 'Alī Páshá, the Grand Vizier, Prokesch-Osten was unable to have the *farman* withdrawn. It cannot be assumed, however, that his actions were completely without effect, for the original decision to

disperse the remaining followers of Bahá'u'lláh among various outposts within the Ottoman Empire was suddenly reversed. It appears that diplomatic endeavours on behalf of the Bahá'ís did, indeed, help to mitigate the severity of measures taken against them by the Sublime Porte.



*Anton Graf Prokesch von Osten*  
 Photo courtesy Bildarchiv of the Austrian National Library