American Accounts of Romania's War for Independence, 1877-78

Geographical remoteness as well as differences of origin, customs, confession, social and economic organization, and political institutions were not insurmountable barriers to an understanding between Romanians and Americans. Contacts between these two peoples were tentatively made during the first decades of the nineteenth century—contacts which broaden after the end of the American Civil War and the achievement of Romanian independence.

American diplomats manifested an early interest in the Romanian principalities in connection with the Eastern Question. For example, the future president of the United States, John Quincy Adams, who was the American minister resident in St. Petersburg (1809-14), reported to the State Department about the Danubian principalities during the Russo-Turkish war of 1806-12. In addition, American diplomatic envoys at St. Petersburg, Constantinople, and Vienna reported on Romanian affairs during the events of 1821, the Russo-Turkish war of 1828-29, the 1848 revolutions, and the Crimean War. During this period, the increased attention of the European powers in Romanian happenings also stimulated American interest in Danubian affairs.

Direct contacts between the United States and Romania became more frequent owing to the gradual institutional and administrative modernization as well as to the capitalistic development of the Danubian principalities. As early as 1843, the first American commercial vessel arrived at Brăila. Henceforth there were increased economic ties between the United States and the Romanian principalities. A natural corollary of these ties was the establishment of the first American diplomatic representatives in the principalities at Galați in 1858 and at București in 1867. Before the achievement of Romanian independence, American political and diplomatic circles displayed a vivid interest in the Danubian principalities. American consuls in Galați and București reported to Washington in detail on such Romanian topics as the origins of the people, the Latin character of the language, the socio-economic structure of the country, political and religious institutions, foreign trade, financial organization, and army. Relations between Romania, which after 1859 was on the path toward national unification and independence, and the United States, which was a powerful industrial country, were increasingly integrated within the framework of modern international affairs.

Turkish refusal from 1875 to 1877 to recognize the independence of Romania and Serbia as well as to grant liberties to oppressed nationalities
in the Ottoman Empire, such as the Bulgarians, further stimulated the interest of European governments and also that of the United States in the Eastern Question. The highly industrialized American republic, wishing to extend its trade in the eastern Mediterranean, the Black Sea basin, and Russia, was inexorably drawn into this international political problem. Although the United States maintained strict neutrality, American public opinion and official circles, which sympathized with the Balkan peoples' struggle for political emancipation, tended to favor Russian policy in the area. On the other hand, the United States, like Great Britain, was directly interested in maintaining the integrity of the antiquated Ottoman Empire. Thus, the curiosity of American public opinion was increasingly aroused about Romania during the war of 1877-78.

A few books about Romania by American travelers had been published in the United States in the middle of the nineteenth century, including those by Vincent Nolte and the physicians Valentine Mott and James Oscar Noyes. In 1877, the number of such books grew. Such publicists as George Makepeace Towle, Linus Pierpont Brockett, Byron Andrews, and J. D. O'Conner penned essays devoted to the Eastern Question, to the history of the Russo-Romanian-Turkish war, and to Romania itself. Such writings continued to appear in 1878, including those by professor Alexander Jacob Schem, R. Grant Barnwell, L. P. Brockett and Porter C. Bliss, Charles Richard Tuttle, and R. A. Hammond. Also of particular interest were the battlefront ac-


3. Alexander J. Schem, *The War in the East: An Illustrated History of the Conflict between Russia and Turkey with a Review of the Eastern Question* (New York: H. S. Goodspeed, 1878); R. Grant Barnwell, *The Russo-Turkish War: Comprising an Account of the Servian Insurrection, the Dreadful Massacre of Christians in Bulgaria, and Other Turkish Atrocities, with... the Stirring Battles and Thrilling Incidents of the War...* (Philadelphia: J. E. Potter, 1878); L. P. Brockett and Porter C. Bliss, *The Conquest of Turkey; or, The Decline and Fall of the Ottoman Empire, 1877-8: A Complete History of the Late War between Russia and Turkey, Including the Causes of the War... Graphic Descriptions of the Two Empires... etc., etc. To Which Is Added Biographical Sketches of the Leading Actors in this Great Drama* (Philadelphia: Hubbard, 1878); Charles