

Eastern Question. Russia strongly opposed even the idea that the Rumanian delegates should be allowed to put their case before the Congress, and consent was obtained only with difficulty; after Lord Salisbury, England's representative, had ironically remarked that 'having heard the representative of Greece, which was claiming foreign provinces, it would be but fair to listen also to the representatives of a country which claimed only what was its own'. The incorporation of Bessarabia with Russia was nevertheless ratified by the Congress, on July 13, 1878. Rumania was deprived of a rich and fertile province, with a fundamentally Rumanian population, receiving in exchange a swamp, the sandy soil of which was hardly capable of cultivation, and the population of which was composed of Turks, Tartars, Bulgarians, and a handful of Rumanians. The Rumanians could do nothing but submit and console themselves with, and mark well, the words which Lord Beaconsfield sympathetically addressed to them, that 'in politics the best services are often rewarded with ingratitude'. Thence onward Rumania passed through a period of comparative quiet in her external relations. On the 10th (22nd) of May, 1881, the country was proclaimed a kingdom, and upon the head of the first King of Rumania was placed a crown of steel made from one of the guns taken before Plevna from an enemy centuries old.

It may be interesting to note that after the abdication of Prince Alexander of Battenberg, in 1887, the Bulgarian throne was offered to King Carol. It is probable that the project was opposed both by Russia and by Austria; but Bucarest also wisely rejected it. The deep racial differences and the complete contrast in national ideas would have made an harmonious political union between the two peoples impossible.