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# Eugène Boré and the Bulgarian Catholic Movement

BY

STAFFORD POOLE, C.M.<sup>1</sup>

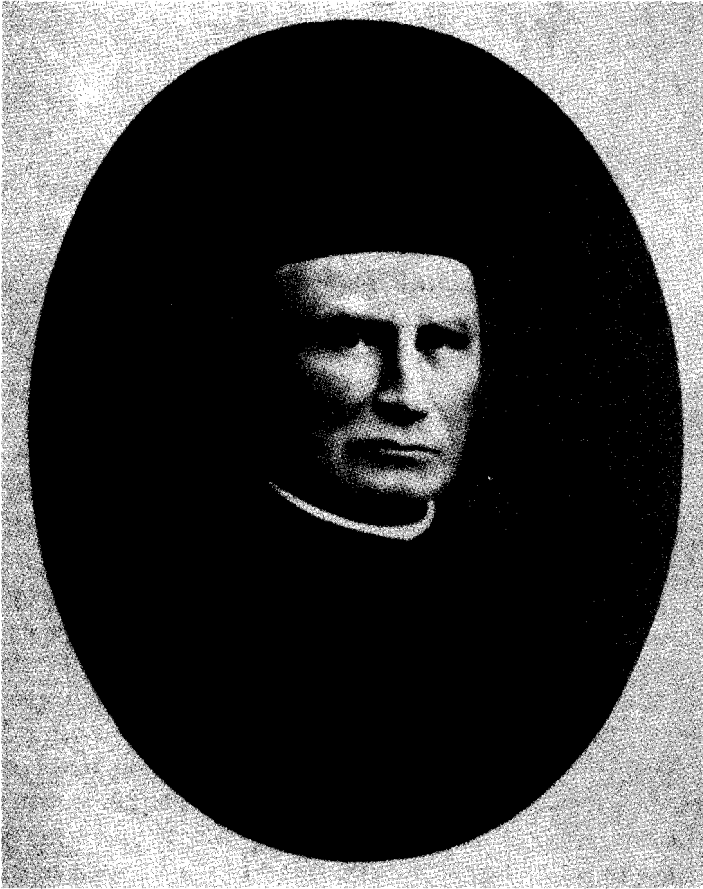
It has long been accepted among historians that nationalism was the dominant force in nineteenth-century Europe. The development of national consciousness among peoples, however, was varied and complex. At times it manifested itself in an attempt to achieve an ethnic identity and independence of foreign rule. At other times it involved a process of unification into a nation-state or an empire. In some countries it took on the characteristics of imperialism. A sense of national identity has often been linked with religious values, as in Ireland and Poland.

For centuries Bulgaria, like most of the Balkans, was under the political and military rule of the Islamic Ottoman Empire, while the Bulgarian Church was subject to the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople. As in some other countries nationalism began with a revival of the Bulgarian language and the spread of education. The movement sought to abandon the use of foreign tongues, especially Greek, which was common in commercial centers and among the middle and upper classes. In the nineteenth century the growth of schools with instruction in Bulgarian gave impetus to the movement. Originally, however, this nationalism was cultural, not political, that is, it sought independence of Greek cultural domination, not Turkish political domination.

It had characteristics, however, that were unique. Cultural nationalism became associated with an independent Bulgarian Church and with a short-lived effort to achieve this independence through union with the Roman Catholic Church. This article will deal with one chapter of that history: the role played by Eugène Boré and his fellow priests of the Vincentian Community in this nationalistic rapprochement with Rome.

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<sup>1</sup>The original version of this paper was given at the annual meeting of American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, Monterey, CA, 22 September 1981.



Eugène Boré, C.M. (1809-1878; superior general 1874-1878)

### The Romantic Missionary

Eugène Boré was born at Angers, in Anjou, in 1809. He came from a large and very Catholic family. His father, a former Napoleonic army officer, died when the boy was young and the family was left in straitened circumstances. The young Eugène attended boarding and preparatory schools in his home town. He quickly showed an extraordinary aptitude for foreign languages to which he devoted himself with enthusiasm. Because of his family's poverty, however, he had to turn to other quarters for financial assistance for his higher education.

He sought the help of the count de Frayssinous, the minister of ecclesiastical affairs who in 1822 became the Grand Master of the University, the centralized organization of public instruction founded by Napoleon. Boré explained his needs in a series of elegant and faultless Latin verses that so impressed Frayssinous that he awarded the young man a much needed scholarship.

In 1826 Boré entered the Collège Stanislas, a school that had recently been reestablished by the Bourbon monarchy. In that same year he bested the future poet and dramatist Alfred de Musset (1810-1857) in the competitive examinations for all the lycées and colleges of France. Boré then undertook the study of law but found it unsuited to his temperament. He quickly returned to his first love, oriental languages, and began studying them at the Collège de France.

In 1832 Boré encountered the first of two major influences in his life. This was the Abbé Felicité de Lamennais (1782-1854), the man who was to have the most profound and lasting influence on him both personally and intellectually. Lamennais was then at the height of his reputation as the key figure in the rebuilding of the Catholic Church in France after the Bourbon restoration.<sup>2</sup> He was regarded by his disciples as a new "Father of the Church." Eugène and his brother Léon both became his followers and, when not attending school, lived at the Abbé's retreat, school, and country home at La Chesnaie in Brittany. Eugène became not only a disciple but one of Lamennais's closest friends. There exist some sixty-three letters from Lamennais to Boré. The disciple's name does not usually appear in biographies or histories of Lamennais, at least those in English. This may be because he did not attain the eminence of Jean-Baptiste Lacordaire or Olympe Gerbet, or because so much of his work was done outside of France, or because their complete correspondence has not been available to historians. Yet of all the Abbé's followers, Eugène was the one who was personally the closest to him and remained loyal for the longest time.

In the chaos that followed the French Revolution and the fall of Napoleon, the Church in France was still trying to rebuild its organizational life. Traditional methods of priestly formation and Catholic education in general had all but disappeared. In the aftermath people were searching for new approaches to religion. When Lamennais

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<sup>2</sup>Gerard van Winsen, C.M. "La vie et les travaux d'Eugène Boré (1809-1878)." *Nouvelle Revue de Science Missionnaire* 34, no. 2 (1978):81-82.

appeared on the scene, he electrified France with his thought and writing style. "This is a book that will waken the dead," said Frayssinous after reading one of Lamennais's works. Lamennais and his school did not belong to the traditionalist pre-revolutionary system of priestly and intellectual formation. Lamennais was ordained to the priesthood without ever having attended a seminary, and his education in theology was largely that of an autodidact. His great disciple Lacordaire was also largely self-taught, and Boré himself, when he came to embrace the priesthood, had only a few years of systematic theology, largely from private study. Unfortunately, what was gained in flexibility was often lost to instability and lack of organic continuity.

What were the ideas expounded by the new "Father of the Church?" The most important, almost all of which were shared by Boré throughout his life, were the following: (1) the necessity of authority as the basis for certitude in religion; (2) the place of theology in the hierarchy of the sciences; (3) the implications of religion for politics; (4) the condemnation of religious indifference; (5) the freedom of the Church within the state; (6) the need for an educated clergy; (7) the establishment of episcopal synods, parochial missions, and Christian schools for the poor. Lamennais, like Boré after him, saw the disruption of the Catholic religion as the reason for the disruption of contemporary society. And so "Lamennais's sovereign idea or ideal was the social regeneration of France, and indeed, of Europe, through the renaissance of Catholicism."<sup>3</sup> The gains of the Revolution should be united with and leavened by Christianity. It was a program that was particularly attractive to romantic young Catholics of the early nineteenth century.

It was from Lamennais, then, that Boré acquired most of the fixed principles that dominated the rest of his life. Foremost among these were: (1) the concept of social regeneration through a renewed Catholicism; (2) separation from the religious authority of Rome inevitably resulted in social and intellectual deterioration and in some cases, such as that of the Armenians, the loss of national independence as well; (3) everything good in history came from Christianity; (4) learning and science were the primary means for bringing men to the truth; (5) the right of freedom of religion was sacred and imprescriptable.

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<sup>3</sup>Bernard Reardon, *Liberalism and Tradition: Aspects of Catholic Thought in Nineteenth Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 64.

Lamennais's ideas were not acceptable to the majority of French bishops or to Rome. In 1832 Gregory XVI condemned many of them in the encyclical *Mirari Vos*, calling them "enormous in wickedness." Alienated from the Church, Lamennais eventually renounced Catholicism and never reconciled with it. Leaving the priesthood, he continued various literary and political activities until his death in 1854. Nothing is known of Boré's personal feelings and attitudes throughout the crisis and his master's growing estrangement from the Catholic Church. We do know, however, that he was still corresponding with Lamennais long after the latter had ceased to be a practicing Catholic—the last known letter was dated 31 December 1840, from Julfa, Persia.<sup>4</sup> This continued attachment seems to have proved embarrassing to Boré's official biographers who attributed it to his desire to bring back his erring master to the right path. This may well be true, but it is also true that Boré—young, romantic, idealistic, and loyal—could not bring himself to abandon one he loved. He regarded both Lacordaire (who had left La Chesnaie in the night, leaving only a note behind) and Gerbet as deserters—even Charles de Montalembert regarded Lacordaire's change of heart as "precipitate." Whereas in later life Boré kept up a correspondence with Montalembert, whom he regarded as a friend, there is no evidence of any resumption of relations with Lacordaire.

While Lamennais was involved in the crisis that eventually led to his renunciation of Catholicism, Boré's career was advancing rapidly. During the cholera epidemic of 1831 in Paris he worked with the victims of the pestilence and though stricken himself, he recovered. In 1833 he was accepted as a member of the Asiatic Society of Paris and in the following year he was named substitute professor of Armenian at the Collège de France. He was also an early member of Frédéric Ozanam's Saint Vincent de Paul Society.

In 1834 the French government sent Boré to Venice to advance his knowledge of Armenian with the Mekhitarists, an Armenian order dedicated to the reunion of the separated Armenian churches with Rome. In 1837 the French Minister of Public Instruction, François Guizot, in collaboration with the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, sponsored a journey to Persia. Boré began the expedition with

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<sup>4</sup>The anonymous authors of the *Notice bibliographique* state that Boré broke off correspondence with Lamennais in 1836, but later they include the 1840 letter from Persia (*Eugène Boré: XVe Supérieur General de la Congrégation de la Mission: notice bibliographique suivie d'extraits de son journal et de sa correspondance* [Paris: 1879], 5, 75-78).

lengthy stays in Vienna and Trieste. The former had a strong and influential Armenian colony. In December of 1837 he arrived in Constantinople where he lived with an Armenian family.

It was during his six months sojourn in that city that Boré encountered the second great influence in his life: the priests of the Congregation of the Mission. The Congregation's original function had been the giving of rural missions and the operation of diocesan seminaries, not foreign missions. Even in the lifetime of its founder, however, it had undertaken limited mission activities in Scotland, Ireland, and Madagascar. With the suppression of the Jesuits in 1773, the French government cast about for successors and replacements in the various foreign missions. The Vincentian superior general, Antoine Jacquier, was reluctant to accept these missions, claiming a lack of qualified personnel, but pressure from the government of Louis XVI soon forced them to replace the French Jesuits in various missions throughout the world. These included the mission and the royal observatory in Peking as well as educational work and missions in the eastern Mediterranean: Naxos, Salonika, Santorini, and Smyrna. In 1782 they established themselves at the mission and college of Saint-Benoît in Constantinople, where they have remained to the present day. These missions were, and in great part have remained outposts of French political influence and culture.

Saint-Benoît had a checkered career, both as school and mission. It was a center of refuge and protection for Armenians and would become a center of the Bulgarian reunion movement. It became, as it still is, a prestigious school for the Turkish upper classes. Boré wrote to his friend, the publisher Eugène Taconet, in 1837, "with what joy I saw, while visiting it, that it was France which, from the point of view of enlightenment and efforts to spread civilization, held the very first rank above all other nations."<sup>5</sup> Because the Vincentians were also interested in Armenia, one of their number was delegated to accompany Boré on his journey inland

The journey took the travelers through Turkey and Armenia, as far as Persia. Commenting on what he observed in the Ottoman Empire, he wrote of his brother toward the end of 1838, "I have thrown at my feet all frivolous thoughts of the world . . . and I am firmly decided to work the rest of my days, according to my feeble

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<sup>5</sup>Eugène Boré, *Correspondance et Memoires d'un Voyageur en Orient*, 2 vols. (Paris: 1840), 1: 101.

means, to set in place some stones of the great edifice of social reconstruction which is being prepared . . . Perhaps I would be useful to the Catholic Church, outside of which everything decays and declines, as I have seen so clearly in traversing these formerly orthodox countries."<sup>6</sup>

From the political point of view, Boré saw a special mission for France in the Middle East. A major part of that mission was to block the expansion of imperialist Russia and the forces of Orthodoxy. "It is a question of saving a vast part of the Church menaced by a terrible enemy [that is, Russia]."<sup>7</sup> He used the specter of Russian imperialism to goad the French into accepting their responsibilities in the orient. "France is the temporal patron of Catholicism in the orient. Today there is more need than ever for its support. Besides, if the indefatigable charity of the French assists it with some of its gifts, it will redound to the lasting glory of our fatherland and a great good for the Catholic religion."<sup>8</sup> His anti-Russian attitude would come into play in the Bulgarian reunion movement.

In Persia Boré hit on two means of extending French and Catholic influence. One was that the French government should send a special embassy to Persia, the other was that the Vincentian community should be entrusted with the direction of a college to be founded at Tabriz. Both proposals were accepted. Before he left Persia, Boré, a man of indefatigable energy and idealism, founded four more schools in the southern part of the country.

By 1842 he was back in Constantinople. In the following year, after refusing the post of French consul in Jerusalem, partly because he was already thinking of entering the priesthood, he paid rapid visits to Paris and Rome. He was still inclined toward the priesthood, despite the fact that Pope Gregory XVI told him that he could do more good as a layman. In 1847 he made a fact-finding tour of the Middle East for the French government, in the course of which he wrote an influential pamphlet, *Mémoire sur les Lieux Saints*. It was an exhaustive study of French claims to patronage over Latin Christians and the shrines in the Holy Land and also an appeal to French nationalism to counterbalance the growing influence of Russia. In the quaint phrasing of the official biography of Boré, "Serious minds had for some time been

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<sup>6</sup>To Léon Boré, December 31, 1838, *ibid.*, 2: 107.

<sup>7</sup>To Eugène Taconet, from Saint-Benoît, 27 January 1845, *ibid.*, 2: 212-13.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 1: 401-402.



occupied with the all important question of the Holy Places. Everywhere was denounced the effrontery of Russia, seeking to dispossess France of her ancient protectorate and to substitute the Muscovite influence."<sup>9</sup> Although the matter has not been carefully studied, the reactions of contemporaries seem to indicate that Boré's pamphlet helped to form French popular attitudes toward the question of the Holy Places and consequently to lay the psychological foundation for the Crimean War (1853-1856).

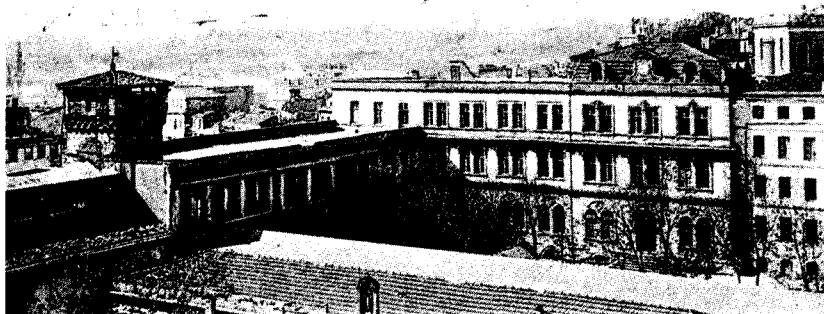
On 28 January 1849 Boré was accepted into the Vincentian Community, though he did not immediately enter the internal seminary (novitiate). On 7 April 1850 he was ordained to the priesthood in Constantinople and on 8 June of that year entered the internal seminary at Paris. Less than a year later he made his vows (29 January 1851) and then accompanied the superior general, Jean-Baptiste Étienne, on a visitation of the houses of the Vincentians and Daughters of Charity in Algeria. In May 1851 he returned to Constantinople as superior of Saint-Benoît and on 6 September was named provincial superior of all the Vincentians in the Near East. Unfortunately Boré was no administrator and his frequent absences from Saint-Benoît prompted much criticism. He had strong ideas and little tolerance for contrary opinions. The complaints and pressure became so great that in 1866 he was recalled to Paris, where he took up the post of secretary general of the Vincentian Community and director of the Daughters of Charity. He narrowly escaped death during the Commune uprising of 1871. In 1874 he was elected superior general, but his generalate was brief and comparatively uneventful. He died on 3 May 1878. His last official act was to sign an order sending a Vincentian missionary to Persia.

### **The Growth of Bulgarian Nationalism**

Bulgarian nationalism began as a literary revival in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In contrast with nationalism in other nations, it soon came to emphasize religious questions. In Bulgaria political independence or nationhood was a consequence of a spiritual or ecclesiastical independence. In the early nineteenth century Bulgarian religious life was totally dominated by Greek Orthodoxy and the patriarch of Constantinople. The clergy, called Phanariotes from the

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<sup>9</sup>*Lives of the Superiors General of the Congregation of the Mission* (privately printed, n.d.).



Saint-Benoît in the Nineteenth Century.

region of Constantinople from which they had originally come, relentlessly suppressed the Bulgarian language and native forms of worship. Greek language and literature predominated among the Bulgarians. The clergy, in addition, were notoriously corrupt and venal. As the national consciousness of the Bulgarians grew, so did their resentment of foreign religious domination. Many came to believe that the best means of achieving religious independence was union with the Church of Rome while retaining a distinctive Bulgarian rite. This was especially true after the Crimean War, when Russia's defeat weakened its influence as an effective patron of the Balkan peoples. Some Bulgarian nationalists hoped that rapprochement with Rome would bring them French patronage. Such a move, of course, would have a strong appeal to Boré who saw in it the validation of his own long-held beliefs.

Boré's earliest contact with this movement was in the person of Dragan Tsankov (1827-1911), a leading Bulgarian intellectual who had been educated in Vienna. Tsankov came to Constantinople in 1854 and there worked for a free and independent Bulgarian state. He and Boré quickly became close friends. With Boré's help, Tsankov was able to bypass the obstructionism of the Sublime Porte (as the government of the Ottoman Empire was called) and to establish a press at Saint-Benoît. He was soon publishing a journal, *Bulgaria*, to which Boré often contributed articles. The magazine, which appeared from

1859 until 1861, openly attacked the Greek patriarchate, sometimes in virulent fashion, refuted oriental prejudices against Catholicism, and strove to show that the Bulgarians could obtain religious emancipation only through the pope. The Orthodox, in turn, answered through their own journals. Some months after the appearance of the first issue of *Bulgaria*, Tsankov converted to Catholicism and took up a post as a teacher at Saint-Benoît.

Tsankov's conversion led to others and the movement toward union seemed to be gathering momentum. Some observers, like Boré and Brunoni, the Latin vicar in Constantinople, realize that politics and nationalism were playing paramount roles in this movement. They seem to have hoped, however, that religious good would come out of this sometimes uneasy alliance. Boré, for his part, learned Bulgarian and for years there was a Bulgarian rite Sunday liturgy at Saint-Benoît.

In July 1859, representatives of some ten thousand Orthodox Bulgarians of Kilkis, a town about thirty miles north of Salonika (where the Vincentians had a house) approached one of the Latin missionaries. They asked him to send a letter to the pope, requesting permission for them to affiliate with the Roman Church while retaining their own rite. Boré immediately went to Kilkis to investigate the situation at first hand, and partly through his instrumentality their request was granted. Throughout 1859 more Bulgarian separatists continued to petition union from Brunoni and from the Armenian Catholic patriarch in Constantinople. Brunoni had doubts about the motivations of the Bulgarians, but Rome was entranced with the possibilities of mass union.

In December 1860 a Bulgarian priest was exiled by the Greek Metropolitan of Varna for having had himself ordained by a Bulgarian prelate in Constantinople. In order to flee the persecution of the Greeks, he took refuge in Saint-Benoît and then became a Catholic. In the same month occurred one of the major events of the union process. On 30 December, two archimandrites, Makariji Savov and Josif Sokolski, together with one hundred and twenty lay people, petitioned the Latin vicar and the Armenian Catholic patriarch for admission to the Church of Rome. They were acting in the name of two thousand of their compatriots in Constantinople. The petition was accepted. An act of union was signed by Tsankov and a statement issued on behalf of the papacy that Bulgarian Catholics would have an autonomous hierarchy (long one of their demands of the Greeks) and that nothing more

would be required of them beyond the stipulations for union laid down in the Council of Florence (1439). This group was soon followed by one hundred and forty-eight families in Adrianople and the region of Monastir in Macedonia.

The Porte, with which Boré had strong influence, shared his view that the union with Rome would weaken Bulgarian connections with Russia. This was confirmed by the vigorous protests lodged by the tsar's government against the union and the subsequent Russian efforts to thwart it. The Ottoman government, however, recognized the autonomy of the Bulgarian hierarchy in 1870. Makariji was appointed ecclesiastical head of the Bulgarian Catholic community and Tsankov its civil head. Brunoni established a Committee of Bulgarian Union to assist the converts, with Boré as one of its chief members. With funds supplied by the French ambassador and the Roman Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith, a church of the Catholic Bulgarian rite was established in Galata. There, in January 1861, the first Catholic Bulgarian Eucharist was offered. In that same year Boré established a Bulgarian seminary in connection with Saint-Benoît.

Boré was enthusiastic about the movement but not naively so. The romantic young nationalist of twenty years before had been tempered in the forge of experience. Pope Pius IX, on the other hand, was overly sanguine about the possibilities of total union. Reports of further union movements in other parts of Bulgaria encouraged him. In January 1861, he wrote to Boré to ask him to accompany Sokolski to Rome because the Pope had decided to consecrate the archimandrite as an archbishop. Boré, like some others, felt that the Pope was acting too hastily. In addition to the fact that the archimandrite, who had been a *haiduk* or anti-Turkish bandit before becoming a monk, was seventy-five years old, he seemed too ambitious to Boré, even to the point of wanting to be made a patriarch. (Pius IX supposedly told him, "When you have half a million Bulgarians reunited with Rome, I will give you a patriarch.")<sup>10</sup> On 8 April 1861, Pius IX personally consecrated the Bulgarian at a ceremony in the Sistine Chapel. Boré had accompanied Sokolski as interpreter and had also translated the entire ceremony into Bulgarian. Sokolski was given the further title of vicar apostolic of Bulgaria and was showered with every sign of papal good will.

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<sup>10</sup>Van Winsen, "La vie," 86.

Sokolski made a triumphal return to Constantinople where his new position was officially certified by a government decree. The prospects for wholesale reunion now seemed brighter than ever. Less than two months later, however, Sokolski disappeared and shortly afterward a letter, purportedly written by him from Russia, announced his abandonment of Catholicism and urged his countrymen to do the same. This seemed to confirm some of Boré's worst suspicions. The despair of the Bulgarian Catholic community was lightened some years later when it was discovered that the archbishop had been kidnapped by tsarist agents. Sokolski's role and attitudes in all this, however, are still vague and suspect.

The situation was not helped when Rome appointed a Latin rite Bulgarian, unsympathetic to the oriental rites, as head of the Bulgarian Catholic community in Constantinople. By the time a member of the Bulgarian rite was appointed in 1865, the fortunes of the Catholic community in Constantinople had ebbed. They were reduced to a few hundred people and a single priest. The principal focus of activity shifted to Macedonia and Thrace. The last Bulgarian rite Catholic archbishop in Constantinople died in 1925.

In the 1870s the Bulgarians turned to revolution as the means to achieve independence. An uprising in 1876 was suppressed by the Turks with such ferocity that it aroused public opinion throughout Europe. Tsankov, who had opposed the uprising, toured the courts of Europe to seek support for Bulgarian autonomy. Russia declared war on the Ottoman Empire and by the treaty of San Stefano (3 March 1878) compelled it to recognize an autonomous Bulgaria with extensive borders. France, Britain, and Germany forced a revision of the terms by the treaty of Berlin (13 July 1878) that recognized a territorially reduced Bulgaria as an autonomous unit under a vague Ottoman sovereignty. Tsankov helped to draft a constitution, one of the most democratic in Europe, and a nephew of the tsar, Alexander of Battenberg (whose English descendants anglicized the name to Mountbatten), became prince.

### **The Vincentians in Macedonia**

After Boré's recall in 1866, Macedonia became the center of Vincentian activity among Bulgarian rite Catholics. In addition to the house at Salonika, another was founded in Monastir specifically to help the Bulgarians. In 1883 Thrace and Macedonia were made vicari-

ates apostolic. Lazar Mladenov, a Vincentian and the first vicar apostolic of Macedonia, was consecrated a bishop. Two years later a boys school at Zeitenlik that had been conducted by the Vincentians was changed into a minor seminary for Bulgarians, with Saint-Benoît continuing to be the major seminary. In 1889 the Vincentians began the establishment of an order of Bulgarian nuns, the Eucharistines. By 1892 a large number of the Vincentians were transferring to the Bulgarian rite.

In 1894 this entire movement collapsed, never to recover. Bulgaria came more and more under Russian influence, as the tsarist government cast itself in the role of champion of all slavnic peoples. Eventually Bulgarian independence owed as much to Russia as to any other single factor. A sustained campaign by the Orthodox Exarch, strongly supported by the government, played on the nationalism of the Bulgarians and equated Catholicism with the loss of nationality. Large numbers returned to Orthodoxy with the same ease with which they had left it. Even Bishop Mladenov himself made a short return to Orthodoxy but soon recanted and eventually settled in Rome, where he lived in retirement. It became obvious that the Bulgarian Catholic rite, for the majority of the people, lacked any deep roots. There had not been sufficient time to prepare an educated clergy. The spirit of nationalism, first manifested in a revolt against Greek ecclesiastical dominance, now turned against Roman dominance as well.

Dragan Tsankov also repudiated the union and returned to Orthodoxy. He was active in the new Bulgarian government, holding the offices of Minister of Foreign Affairs and Prime Minister. The tumultuous conditions of Bulgarian politics eventually led him to retire to Saint Petersburg, where he died in 1911.

## Conclusions

The movement of Bulgarian union was more nationalistic and political than it was religious. The combination of cultural, political, and nationalistic factors that gave birth to it also doomed it to death.

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### Additional Readings

Eugène Boré: *l'homme privé, l'homme public, les voyages, les oeuvres, d'après un témoin de sa vie avec des nombreux extraits des souvenirs personnels de Boré*. Lille: undated.

"Notes sur la vie de M. Boré." *Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission*, 43 (1878):352-464; 521-678; 44 (1879):8-103.

Poole, Stafford. "Eugene Bore and the Vincentian Mission in the Near East." *Vincentian Heritage* 5, no. 1 (1984):59-102.

Rallaye, Léonce de la. *Eugène Boré et les origines de la question d'Orient*. Paris: 1894.

The impact of it on the average person was superficial. Life went on in the villages, no matter what ecclesiastical authority they accepted.

The movement constituted a relatively small part of Boré's career but it was consistent with the rest of his life. He saw verified in it his own hopes and dreams. He was, however, by that time of his life more realistic than he had been in his youth. He learned prudence and caution and it was no fault of his that the movement did not continue. There is no doubt that the hopes for mass reunion that were entertained in Rome were unrealistic. A vast return of dissident churches has always been a dream of Rome, and in the days when the Church was being strongly buffeted in Europe, the Bulgarian movement seemed a ray of hope. It proved a false dawn.

The Bulgarian Catholic communities were reduced to even further extremities by the Balkan Wars and the First World War. They now number but a few thousand scattered throughout Macedonia, northern Greece, and Istanbul.

In the summer of 1980, while staying at Saint-Benoît, this author had the pleasure of meeting an eighty-eight year old Vincentian priest named Dimitri Bogdanov. He carried the title of Archimandrite of the Bulgarians. He was the last successor to Boré, still working in the same college in which Boré sought union with the Bulgarians. With his death in 1984 the Vincentian ministry to the Catholic Bulgarians came to an end.



Dimitri Bogdanov, C.M. (1895-1984), last Vincentian archimandrite of the Catholic Bulgarians, with the author, Istanbul, August, 1980.



