

## I. T H E O C H A R I D E S

### RELATIONS BETWEEN CYPRIANS AND BULGARIANS AT THE END OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY ACCORDING TO THE MEMOIR OF A BULGARIAN REVOLUTIONARY

The known historiographical sources do not reveal the abundance of information about the relations between Cyprians and Bulgarians in comparison with the known facts about the relations between continental Greeks and Bulgarians. Leontios Makhairas' chronicle is for the time being the sole written document containing detailed information about such relations. A lot of its pages are dedicated to a description of the fate of a certain number of Bulgarians who after having been sold as slaves in the East when the Bulgarian land was conquered by the Turks, happened to come to Cyprus. This attention paid by Leontios Makhairas to the Bulgarian slaves is due to their participation in the war between the Cyprian kingdom and Genua side by side with Cyprian slaves in 1373-74<sup>1</sup>. It is for sure that a thorough survey of the archives of the Bulgarian patriarchy and these of the Cyprian archbishopric will cast light upon the relationship between both orthodox churches in various times of their existence. Furthermore, during the Ottoman rule, and more specifically during the nineteenth century, their influence as supporters of national consciousness increased and their participation in the movement for national liberation became more active.

Greater attention also should be paid to the Bulgarian and Cyprian participation in the 1821 Greek uprising, during which Bulgarians and Cyprians made close contacts. A lot of Cyprians for instance fought the Turks under the leadership of Hadji Christo together with the Bulgarians as warriors of his cavalry.

Whereas the 1821 Greek uprising was a climax in the struggle of the Greeks against the Ottoman conquerors, such a climax in the liberation movement of the Bulgarian people proved to be the April uprising of 1876.

1. See Leontios Makhairas, *Recital concerning the Sweet Land of Cyprus entitled "Chronicle"*. Edited with a translation and notes by K. M. Dawkins, I. Oxford, 1932; P. Tivchev, *The war between Cyprus and Genoa in 1373-1374 and the participation of Bulgarians in it, Etudes Historiques*, Sofia, 1966, pp. 125-145.

It is well known that after the rout of the uprising resulting in a butchery over the Bulgarian people, hundreds of Bulgarian revolutionaries were sent into exile in different parts of the Ottoman empire<sup>2</sup>. Many of them happened to come to the distant island of Cyprus.

Since Byzantian times Cyprus has been known as a place for exile of unruly and dissident persons. Many documents show that the same tradition was kept by the Ottoman rulers after the annexation of Cyprus in the borders of the Ottoman empire. According to these documents dated as early as eighth century there were references about a Bulgarian sent into exile there<sup>3</sup>.

In this respect a lot of interesting facts can be found in Ottoman documentation, records of foreign consulates in Cyprus, letters, pension cases as well as in the memoir<sup>4</sup> of the numerous Bulgarian revolutionaries sent into

2. Stephan Karakostov, *Diarbekirski zatochenitzi, Geroichni senki, biografichni skici i dnevnici*, Sofia, 1946; St. Kenderova, *Novi dokumenti na osmanoturski ezik za bälgarskite zatochenici v Akkia prez 1868-1877*, *Voennioistoricheski sbornik*, I, 1979, p. 96-106.

3. *NBKM*, Orientalski otdel, OAK 246/70.

4. *Yubileen sbornik Koprivshitzza 1837-1939*, II, s. 188-341, Sofia. This memoirs are kept in the National Library "Cyrilus and Methodius", Historic Archives, Collection "April Uprising", IIA 8541; A lettre written by Father Atanas Gabenski to Atanas Popatanasov in Gabene village, and mailed from Cyprus on December 12th 1876. In it the author gave order to his son about the household and described his journey from Tärnovo to Cyprus where he had been sent into exile. Among other things he wrote that they had reached Cyprus "on November 11th and was put in a great jail, while we got fetters on our feet and can get out once in the morning and then at night at ten o'clock p.m.". See *April uprising 1876*, vol. II, compiled by Kirila Vazvázova and others, Sofia, 1955, p. 122. The document is kept in the museum of Kravenik village; A lettre written by the same person to his son and mailed from Cyprus on March 5th 1877 with a similar content. See *April Uprising*, *op. cit.*, p. 141. The document is kept in the museum of Kravenik village; A letter dated July 29th 1877, written on board of steamship "Apollo" by Kiril Botev and other exiles to Evlogius Georgievs in which they informed him that he was being sent into exile in Akkia together with thirty four detained, and that in Cyprus there were exiles as well, see *April uprising*, *op. cit.*, p. 151. This document is kept in the National Library, Historic Archives, Nikola Obretenov', records IID 2904; A petition by Peter Marinov to the National Assembly in Sofia to have been given a pension for his participation in the Uprising and banishment in Cyprus. To verify his claim he got a certificate issued by the town-hall of Novo Selo. See *April uprising*, *op. cit.*, p. 628. This document is kept in the Central State Archive, Sofia, vol. VII, 1884, 35, 36; A petition by Konstantin Klisarov to the National Assembly in Sofia, in which he asked the Assembly to be given a pension for his participation in the Uprising and banishment in Cyprus, and to verify his claim he got a certificate issued by the town-hall of Peshtera, see *op. cit.*, p. 169. The document is kept in the Central State Archive, Sofia, D 32/3, 1904, 149, 150; Nine certificates issued by the town-hall of various cities in Bulgaria, concerning Oton Ivanov's activity and exile in Cyprus, see *April uprising*, *op. cit.*, p. 171. These documents are kept in the National Library, Historic Archive, Oton Ivanov's records, II A 8549 - a-k; A petition by

exile to Cyprus after the April uprising<sup>5</sup>.

The present speech is based on the memoir of Tancho Shabanov-Bulgarian revolutionary of Koprivshitzta village<sup>6</sup>. In them we see the picturesque figure of the author who presents even pictorial illustrations of the most important events<sup>7</sup>. The comparison of his memoir with other sources proved that they are completely reliable and can serve as a first rate historic source.

Tancho Shabanov was born somewhere between 1844 and 1847 in Koprivshitzta. His activity as a revolutionary began about 1870 when he became a member of Koprivshitzta revolutionary committee founded by Levski. His café became a meeting place for committee members<sup>8</sup>. T. Shabanov was one of the closest associates of G. Benkovski, T. Kableskov, H. Stoyanov and other leading Koprivshitzta revolutionaries. During the April uprising his house was turned into an arm-store and a revolutionary's headquarters. After the crushing of the uprising he was arrested through treachery. The period from his detention to his banishment in Cyprus, which began on December 15th 1877, he spent in several jails where interrogation and beating were daily practice<sup>9</sup>.

Stoyana Petkova Shtarbanova of Novo Selo, in which she asked the National Assembly to be given a pension as a wife of a participant in the Uprising and exile in Cyprus, namely Petko Shtarbanov. See April uprising, *op. cit.*, p. 182. The document is kept in the Central State Archives, D 25/6, 1898; A petition by Petko Boyokliev of Sevlievo in which he asked the National Assembly to have the amount of his pension increased as a participant in the Uprising and exile in Cyprus, see April uprising, *op. cit.*, p. 194. The document is kept in the Central State Archive, D 23/3, 1900, 77; A list prepared by Ivan Kuzmo which contains information about 32 insurgents among whom there are two exiles in Cyprus, Krastyo Elenkov and Rad. Delinikolov, see April uprising, *op. cit.*, pp. 242-243. This document is kept in the Panagyurishte Museum.

5. Tancho Shabanov says that together with him fourty three more revolutionaries were sent in the fortress of Nicosia, and when they had arrived they found there even more Bulgarian exiles from Gabrovo and the neighbouring villages, without mentioning their number. See Yubileen sbornik Koprivshitzta 1837-1937, *op. cit.*, pp. 316-319, 327. The exact number of the exiles could possibly be found when a thorough study of the Ottoman records belonging to the jails of Nicosia and Famagusta would be completed.

6. T. Shabanov, A discription of my life, National Library, Historic Archives, Collection "April uprising"; II A 8541. Besides this memoir there are some notes in which the author describes in 11 items his revolutionary activity since the days of Levski till his liberation from exile, as well as sixty personal documents, see National Library, Historic Archive, Collection "April uprising", II A 9270, and Pension case, II 57.

7. Cf. Ana Roshkovska, Ilyustrirana živopis na Aprilskoto västanie, *Vekove*, 2, 1976, pp. 5-14. The author wrote characteristically that the graphics of the two Koprivshitzta revolutionaries and artists—Christo Koichev and Tancho Shabanov—became part of a new art spreading throughout Bulgaria, in which the theme of their works was reality itself, patriotism, struggle for liberation, p. 13.

8. Ivan Shabanov, *Chronicler of the April uprising*, Sofia, 1965, pp. 5-6.

9. Yubileen Sbornik Koprivshitzta, *op. cit.*, pp. 265-313.

But what kind of life the exiles in the fortress of Nicosia were leading? As T. Shabanov wrote, they were kept in the fortress jail only during the night, and during the day being in fetters, they could walk or practice some craft. "...We lived in this jail quite well, since we were taken in custody for the night, but in the day we sat in the yard... As we saw that we would be able to live there (Nicosia), we began to work, whatever one could, and I knitted zimbili or painted boxes"<sup>10</sup>.

T. Shabanov layed stress particularly on the kind treatment of the Bulgarian exiles by the locals. He pointed out this interesting and important detail when describing their departure from Cyprus. It is clear that this attitude has impressed him strongly as something pleasant.

T. Shabanov wrote that they had arrived in Nicosia about three o'clock a.m. When they sat in the fortress-yard to rest, some citizens approached them, treated them to a cup of coffee, and offered them some food. Having found out their nationality, the townsfolk immediately came to their help: "As soon as we arrived in this jail, local Greeks brought us five or six quits, several shirts, and pants, and gave us some money"<sup>11</sup>. The locals didn't forget them and often supported them with money, especially for major Christian holidays. T. Shabanov mentioned that: "...they gave us some grosha for Christmas as well as for Easter"<sup>12</sup>, which is not of little importance since the food in those days was cheap, as T. Shabanov had observed himself<sup>13</sup>. We saw another exciting picture at the moment of the exiles' Liberation followed by their departure. As true Christians they asked the locals to open for them the nearest church in order to offer a prayer. The church was opened immediately, the bells chimed, liturgy followed.

Since they got four days till their actual departure for Bulgaria the exiles traversed the whole city and apparently befriended many locals<sup>14</sup>. The next part of T. Shabanov's memoir shows that "...when we were to go off this town several of the younger locals collected money and gave to each of us 20 grosha of the collected sum. Having put our luggage in the cart, many youths went

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 319-320.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 325.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 325.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 320.

14. They were released on the basis of article 17 of the San Stefano treaty, which runs as follows "The Sublime Porte gives general amnesty to all Ottoman subjects, detained during the recent events, and orders all detainees or exiles to be released immediately". Cf. *Meždunarodni aktove i dogovori (1648-1918)*, compiled by Prof. Slava Stefanova, Sofia, 1958, p. 152.

to see us off up to the end of the town and then got back because it was too late—they could not stay with us anymore even if they wanted because it was midnight and the doors of the fortress had been already closed<sup>15</sup>.

They were received with the same attitude in the town of Larnaka where they had to wait three days for the arrival of the ship going to Constantinople. Since they had to spend the night somewhere, they asked if there was any inn in the town. The locals told them that there was no inn in the town and at the same time interrogated them who they were. When they found out that they were Bulgarian “exiles” they took them to “St. Lazarus” church and accommodated them in the rooms belonging to the church<sup>16</sup>.

What did urge the Cyprians to display so much sympathy and such kind attitude toward revolutionaries coming from a remote and unknown country? This good feeling no doubt was caused by the identical fate of the two nations and by the understanding of people who had also suffered under the yoke of the Ottoman conquerors for more than three centuries of their history. And these three centuries were full with similar heroic and numerous but unsuccessful attempts to gain liberation.

We should add another factor - Orthodox Christianity, which in fact was identical with the national consciousness during the Ottoman rule.

15. Yubileen Sbornik Koprivshitzta, *op. cit.*, p. 327.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 328.