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**The Image of the Greeks in the Work of the Bulgarian
Revolutionary and Intellectual Georgi Rakovski**

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the Greek and Serbian governments had to address the problem of the Bulgarian national movement, which was making territorial claims that conflicted with those of the Greeks and the Serbs. The delay in the Bulgarians' national awakening was due to a number of factors: i) the lack of a Bulgarian diaspora in Europe, which could have received and exploited the influences of the European Enlightenment, as in the case of the Serbs and the Greeks; there was a Bulgarian community in Odessa, but the Bulgarians there were originally under Greek influence; ii) the lack of a church to keep the Bulgarian mediaeval tradition going, as the Serbian church did at Sremski Karlovci; iii) the presence of a strong Turkish army in the Bulgarian lands which could easily quell risings; iv) the powerful influence of Greek culture via the Oecumenical Patriarchate and the Greek communities in Bulgaria¹. At the end of the eighteenth

1. Marxist Bulgarian historians considered the principal reasons for the delayed Bulgarian awakening to be the Bulgarian lands' proximity to Constantinople and, especially, the weak Bulgarian bourgeoisie in the interior of Bulgaria. But as the Bulgarian Balkanologist Kraste Mančev notes, both the Greek and the Serbian lands suffered the terrible reprisals of the Turks when they rebelled, yet neither Serbs nor Greeks abandoned their struggle. He thus indirectly demystifies the massacre of Batak (1876), to which the English Liberal party gave considerable publicity in Europe as an opposition tactic against Disraeli's Conservative government. Regarding the weak Bulgarian bourgeoisie, he notes that there were no more than 150 small enterprises in Serbia too before 1903. Mančev regards lack of contact with Western Europe as the principal reason for the Bulgarians' delayed awakening. The opening of the first Bulgarian factory was important, certainly, but even more important was the founding of the first Bulgarian school: see S. Dimitrov and K. Mančev, *Istorija na Balkanskite Narodi*, vol. 2, Sofia 1999, pp. 420-421. In support of Mančev's views, one might also point out that the Romanians too had no native bourgeoisie in the Istrian principalities, nor an aristocracy (*nobilitas*) in Transylvania. Yet Transylvania became the centre of the Romanian national movement, as the Romanians there made use of the ideas of the

century, Greek replaced Church Slavonic in the liturgy and many ecclesiastical posts were given to Greeks. As there were no Bulgarian schools offering a secular education before 1835, the Bulgarians attended Greek schools. It was Greek schools that produced the first generation of the Bulgarian intelligentsia (including Vračanski, Beron, Neofit Rilski, Ivan Seliminski, Hristaki Pavlovič, Rajno Popovič, Konstantin Fotinov, and Vasil Aprilov). A development of the Greek schools was the so-called Greek-Bulgarian schools, with a curriculum devoted mainly to the humanities, with Greek as the teaching medium, but with Bulgarian teachers who had had a Greek education. The first school of this type was founded by the Hellenist Emanuil Vaskidovič in Svištov in 1816; the second (in which the Hellenist Rajno Popovič taught), in Kotel in 1819; Ivan Seliminski briefly opened a similar school in Sliven in 1820; and the most famous Greek-Bulgarian school opened in Karlovo in 1826². The term “Greek” signified the educated and wealthy; “Bulgarian”, the uncouth and uneducated.

The Greek schools in Bulgaria had the same functional purpose as the Latin schools in the West, which is to say that they were seedbeds for the spirit of the European Renaissance, the ideas of the Enlightenment, the new pedagogical methods, and the new perceptions regarding language. They were not propaganda centres for the Greek national ideal³. Serious Bulgarian historians have been quick to refute the canard put about by

European Enlightenment in the framework of the policy of Maria Theresa and Joseph II.

2. See N. Genčev, *Bългарска Кultura XV-XIX в.*, Sofia 1988, p. 202. For the influence of Greek education on the shaping of the Bulgarian intelligentsia, see A. Alexieva, “Grăčката prosveta i formirane na bālgarskata vāzroždenska inteligencia”, *Studia balcanica* 14 (1979) 156-181.

3. See Genčev, *op.cit.* The stance of Kuzman Šapkarev, a Macedono-Bulgarian graduate of a Greek school, illustrates this: “Until then [1857-1859, when the Miladinov brothers launched their movement], everyone knew and acknowledged himself to be a Bulgarian; but one learned Greek, not in order to become a Greek, but to be educated and enlightened, just as the Europeans once learnt Latin, not because they were Latins or in order to be Latinized, but simply because they did not yet have their own scholarly cultured written language. ... And the teachers themselves, often Vlachs or Arvanites, had no such intentions, nor do they appear to have pursued such a goal, and consequently they never told their pupils that they were Greeks or that they should be Hellenized”: see Kuzman Šapkarev, *Za Vāzraždaneto na Bālgaršinata v Makedonija*, Sofia 1984, pp. 42, 44. According to Šapkarev, it was only after the Exarchate was established that the policy of Hellenization took on a serious note.

romantic nineteenth-century Bulgarian historians (especially Marin Drinov, the Nestor of Bulgarian historiography) to the effect that the Oecumenical Patriarchate and the Greeks in general had implemented a specific plan to Hellenize the Bulgarians. Already in 1911, in a study concerning Greek-Bulgarian relations before the ecclesiastical question emerged, the Bulgarian academician Jordan Ivanov extolled the Patriarchate's universal policy, stressing that the Bulgarians had access to ecclesiastical posts; that the Patriarchate retained the titles of the former Bulgarian metropolitans and bishops ("most honourable exarch of all Bulgaria" for the Metropolitan of Trnovo; "Archbishopric of Justiniana Prima, Ohrid, and All Bulgaria"); that the Patriarchate honoured the memory of Clement of Ohrid ("illuminator of Bulgaria"; "great preacher and apostle of all Bulgaria") and of Bulgarian kings of the mediaeval Bulgarian state, such as Asen ("the pious king of the Bulgars, John Asen")⁴. Greek hierarchs looked favourably on the founding of Greek-Bulgarian schools, and they frequently conducted the liturgy in Greek and in Church Slavonic, studied the Bulgarians' manners and customs, and learnt the Bulgarian language, which they used in their sermons. Ivanov dismissed as groundless the widespread notion that the former Metropolitan of Trnovo, Hilarion, was responsible for setting fire to the Bulgarian Patriarchal library, which survived until the early nineteenth century, pointing out that Hilarion himself had undertaken to translate the New Testament into modern Bulgarian in 1821⁵. He regarded the process of Hellenization as a natural development:

The process of Hellenization thus took its natural course. Its success was due, as we have said, to the developed bourgeoisie, to trade, to literature, to the Church, which gradually brought entire areas and races within its fold⁶.

Regardless of the fact that the Greek schools were not seeking to Hellenize the Bulgarians, there was a manifest risk that the Bulgarian intelligentsia would be Hellenized. However, if the political and social circumstances changed, the Bulgarian intelligentsia, steeped in Greek education, could become a linchpin of the Bulgarian national awakening

4. See J. Ivanov, *Izbrani Proizvedenija*, vol. I, Sofia 1982, pp. 164-165.

5. See Ivanov, *op.cit.*, p. 166.

6. See Ivanov, *op.cit.*, pp. 163-164.

—as indeed, eventually, it did. Greek education thus played a part in shaping the Bulgarians' national self-awareness.

The signing of the Treaty of Adrianople in 1829 was followed by the gradual emergence of a Bulgarian national movement, which found expression chiefly in a demand for Bulgarian schools and Bulgarian teachers. The driving force was the Bulgarian communities in Wallachia, Odessa, and Constantinople. One fundamental question confronting the Bulgarian intelligentsia was its future stance towards the Greek language and Greek culture. Basically there were two groups: a pro-Greek group with Rajno Popovič as its chief representative⁷, and a nationalist group with Vasil Aprilov as its chief representative.

Taking as his bottom line the fact that the Bulgarians had managed to overcome their isolation thanks to the Greek language and to succeed in commerce and other spheres of activity, in his *Christoitija ili Blagonravie* (1837) Popovič declared himself in favour of retaining the Greek language so that the younger generation of Bulgarians would have direct access to ancient Greek Classical and Byzantine literature for their moral edification.

*We must with all our hearts and minds urge young people to delve more deeply into the wise and soul-saving writings of Chrysostom, Basil, and Gregory; to extend their interest to Herodotus, Demosthenes, Xenophon, Plato, Thucydides; to work their way attentively through Euripides, Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Homer, to whom all educated peoples have opened their eyes and whom we can neither translate now nor find in Slavonic. And because we wish to become perfect, we must have all these and read them*⁸.

He also considered it essential to retain the Greek language so that Greeks and Bulgarians could communicate.

The young folk take great delight in the Greek language and love it, because Bulgaria is not different and has connections with Greece. For all our prelates are Greeks and all the canons and deacons around them are Greeks. There are many Greeks on Mount Athos, on Sinai, in the Holy Land; every day, for various reasons, assignments and commercial

7. Popovič (1773-1858) acquired a Greek education at Sliven, Thessaloniki, and Chios, and taught Greek at Kotel, Karlovo, and Plovdiv.

8. See R. Popovič, *Christoitija ili blagonravie*, n.p., 1837, pp. 70-71.

affairs, there are Greeks in Bulgaria, and the Bulgarians spend time with the Greeks every day in Greece with no conflict. Our very shepherds live among Greeks. Which is why the older folk confess that when one is among Greeks who speak Turkish, there is no problem, but when they begin to speak Greek, one stands among them as dumb as a tree. For this reason our young people delight in the Greek language, and this is why they use it ad satietatem ... this is why our aristocrats all over Bulgaria ... speak Greek, write and read it every day and cannot do without it. This is why the Greek language must still prevail in Bulgaria. It is very necessary. Slavonic too must be preferred like a mother, but Greek must be the starting-point, must be respected like a wet-nurse, must feed and nourish and imbue present and future generations so that they may wax strong on her sweet milk⁹.

The nationalist group, by contrast, favoured the development of a scholarly codified Bulgarian language, with borrowings from Russian, and stripped of Greek words and influences. In a letter to Popovič dated 20 October 1840 and sent from Odessa, the Bulgarian merchant and former member of the *Filiki Etairia* Vasil Aprilov, who had also founded the first Bulgarian school at Gabrovo in 1835, was unequivocal:

Every people, however small, must cultivate its language. Now is the most appropriate time for the Bulgarians to do this. They have their brothers the Russians attending to and guaranteeing their patriotic enlightenment. ... From their Russian brethren they receive every assistance for their enlightenment, but never from the Greeks or from any other nation. Say what you will, graecomania has come to a head among us. Our wealthy, in their crude, coarse, ignorance, boast: "I am a Greek". And our schoolchildren, since they have learnt Greek and do not know, or scarcely know, Bulgarian, stand with deference and devotion before the Greek education which they have received from their most tender years. If this is to be rectified, the children must learn Bulgarian of their own accord, until they have learnt arithmetic, geography, history, as also Bulgarian phrases; and then, as the final subject, turn their attention to the Slavonic languages and Greek. Thus all peoples proceed, and so too must we. Otherwise, we shall do nothing. ... Only those who have studied in Russia can be of use to their people in various ways; and let every

9. See Popovič, *op.cit.*, pp. 75-76.

*patriot reflect upon it as is proper*¹⁰.

In the introduction to his *Dennica Novo-Bolgarskago Obrazovanija*, Aprilov, clearly influenced by Venelin, pointed out that the Greek language was an intellectual yoke for the Bulgarians and that those Bulgarians who acquired wealth and a Greek education became traitors to their nation¹¹.

The views of the nationalist groups eventually prevailed and the Bulgarian intellectuals, imbued with Greek education, turned to Russian culture and became the main protagonists in the Bulgarian national movement, which was in fact the aim of the Russian policy¹².

Georgi Rakovski exemplifies this Bulgarian sea-change and this equivocal attitude towards the Greeks and Hellenism. From a disciple of Popovič's, he evolved into an ardent supporter of Aprilov's ideas. Born in Kotel in 1821, he had Popovič as his Greek teacher at school there. He continued his schooling in the "Great School of the Nation" in Constantinople, where he studied classical literature, philosophy, theology, rhetoric, physics, and French. In Constantinople he met Neofit Bozveli and Ilarion Makariopolski, who were actively working to establish an autocephalous Bulgarian church, and he was thus initiated early into the Bulgarian national movement. His revolutionary and political activity soon began. In collaboration with the Greeks (Epirots) in Wallachia, in 1841 he planned a rebellion, which was to be prepared in Braila and

10. See V. E. Aprilov, *Izbrani Sacinenija i Pisma* (N8), Sofia 1926, pp. 74-75.

11. See V. E. Aprilov, *Dennica Novo-Bolgarskago Obrazovanija*, Varna 1841, p. 4. Christo Vakilov expressed similar views in the periodical *Bălgarski Knizici*, November 1858: "You will forgive me if I ask what has been achieved by the Bulgarians who have been delving and roaming for so many years through the innumerable rules of the Greek language, which they scarcely understand. What ethics, what education, what foundation, in a word what progress has the nation found in Demosthenes, Thucydides, and Homer in order to emerge from the obscurity of ignorance?" The same view was expressed by the anonymous author of an article in the newspaper *Gajda* on 21 September 1863: "The poor Bulgarians are obsessed by learning these foreign languages and some of them have learnt them quite well and become real Greeks, even teachers of Greek. ... The learning of the Greek language does the Bulgarians more harm than good. ... The Greeks' aim is obvious: they want us to forget our nationality, they have ensured that we cannot get to know our masters better, so that they can more easily oppress us."

12. See *Meždunarodnye Otnošenija na Balkanach 1830-1856 gg.* (ed. V. Vinogradov), Institute of Slavonic and Balkan Studies of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, Moscow 1990, p. 159.

would break out in Bulgaria and in Epiros. But he was arrested by the Wallachian police and handed over to the Ottoman authorities. Since he had a Greek passport and passed himself off as a Greek, he was eventually released, thanks to the diplomatic efforts of the Greek vice-consul in Braila, Velissarios, and the Greek ambassador in Constantinople, Alexandros Mavrokordatos. With Mavrokordatos's help, he was sent to Marseilles, where he enjoyed the protection of the Greek consul. Unable to fulfil his dream of studying in Paris, he returned to Constantinople, where he again met up with Bozveli and Makariopolski, who brought him up to date with their struggle to establish an autocephalous Bulgarian church. From this point on, Rakovski dedicated himself to the Bulgarian national cause. Having failed to become a teacher in Kotel and having served a three-year prison sentence (1844-1847) in Constantinople on a charge of engaging in revolutionary activity, he lived as a political refugee in Novi Sad and Odessa. In Odessa, at the urging of the Russian Slavacist Viktor Grigorovič and the Bulgarian historian Spiridon Palauzov, he embarked upon a systematic study of Bulgarian history. In 1860, he settled in Belgrade, where he edited the periodical *Dunavski Lebed* (The Swan of the Danube). The main aim of the periodical was to bring about a Bulgarian national awakening; and Rakovski's main purpose in Belgrade was to organize a rising in Bulgaria, but within the framework of a broader, Balkan-wide rebellion, after the example set by the *Filiki Etairia*. For this reason, Rakovski felt it was essential to involve the Greek and Serbian governments. He pinned considerable hopes on the Serbian prince Mihajlo Obrenovič and organized revolutionary groups in Belgrade, which became known as the Bulgarian Legion. After the Turks had bombed Belgrade in 1862 and in view of Serbia's wary attitude to the prospect of a more general, Balkan-wide uprising, Rakovski disbanded the Bulgarian Legion and went to Bucharest, where he continued his journalistic activity and once again began to set up small rebel groups. Wallachia became the major centre of the Bulgarian revolutionary movement, of which the Prince of Romania, Alexander Cuza, was tolerant. In 1867, Rakovski founded a new Bulgarian Legion, which did not, however, make any notable achievements, because he died of consumption in the same year at the age of forty-six.

Clearly, Rakovski knew the Greeks well. In his struggle on behalf of the Bulgarian national cause, he sought to make use of the Greek

people's positive aspects to the Bulgarians' advantage. The Greeks were originally a model for the Bulgarians. Rakovski especially referred to the Greeks' thirst for education and their patriotism.

*We vilify the Greeks, but we do not notice that they may almost be compared with the enlightened Europeans! We have clearly lost the majority of the Bulgarians who live in Thessaly, Epiros, Macedonia, and even Thrace, whom the crafty Greeks are daily luring ever closer!*¹³

*The Greeks, scattered in various countries, are distinguished by their churches, their libraries, their schools, and much else. ... In Constantinople, Smyrna, and elsewhere, so many newspapers and periodicals are published by Turkish citizens who are Greeks, Armenians, even Jews. And we Bulgarians, a nation of over five million people, have only the Carigradski Vestnik and coolly expect it to bring us popular enlightenment!*¹⁴

*We are right to turn against the Greeks, but for their considerable achievements they are to be much commended. They make sacrifices great and small when their common interests require it, and this is why they have made such progress in science!*¹⁵

Rakovski regarded the Greeks as potential enemies, but also as a good example to follow. What offended him especially and prevented the Bulgarians from being the equals of the Greeks was the Bulgarians' graecomania, which he attributed mainly to the policy of the Phanariots and the Oecumenical Patriarchate.

*Bulgarian graecomania has caused the greatest harm and the greatest damage to the Bulgarians, and brought the greatest benefit to the Greeks. This is why the Greeks have sought to Hellenize the Bulgarians. It is known that seven million Bulgarian people are no small thing to be assimilated by two million poor Greeks!*¹⁶

Anyone who has studied Bulgarian affairs —i.e. history after the

13. Letter from Rakovski (Novi Sad, January 1857) to Alexander Živkov in Bucharest, *Arhiv na G. S. Rakovski*, vol. I, *Pisma i Rakopisi na Rakovski*, Sofia 1952, p. 56.

14. Letter from Rakovski (Novi Sad, 26 February 1857) to K. Popov in Brăila, *Arhiv na G. S. Rakovski*, *op.cit.*, pp. 85-86.

15. Letter from Rakovski (Belgrade, 27 September 1860) to J. Dajnelov in Constantinople, *Arhiv na G. S. Rakovski*, *op.cit.*, p. 197.

16. Letter from Rakovski (Odessa, 22 August 1859) to the newspaper *Carigradski Vestnik*, *Georgi Stojkov Rakovski, Săčinenija*, vol. II, *Publičitika*, Sofia 1983, p. 58.

*Bulgarians fell under Turkish dominion— even a little knows well that the main cause of the final obliteration of the Bulgarians' nationality was the malicious Phanariots and their clergy, who to this end abolished the patriarchates of Trnovo and Ohrid and replaced them with the wily Phanariots. These Phanariots, it has been proven, burnt countless Old Bulgarian books, wiped out every old Bulgarian memory, introduced the Greek language, and disseminated starry-eyed Hellenism! As we know, this lasted for a few centuries, so that the Bulgarian people were forced into such ignorance and to forget their beloved ethnicity, and one segment of it to commit itself to graecomania and persecute its people. And unfortunately these rusty old minds which have not yet been liberated from the fraud of graecomania still remain among the Bulgarians even today*¹⁷.

Rakovski initially distinguished the Greeks of the independent Greek kingdom from the Phanariots. But the Bulgarian struggle to establish an autocephalous church after 1860 was also a matter of immediate concern to the Greek government, for the fundamental issue was not the Bulgarians' right to a church, but the drawing of that church's boundaries¹⁸. This was essentially the beginning of the Macedonian Question. Greece's maximalist territorial aspirations to the north, as became apparent in the Graeco-Serbian negotiations of 1861 between Markos Renieris and Ilija Garašanin, extended as far as the Balkans and Mount Skardos¹⁹. The Greek claims thus conflicted with the Serbian and indirectly with the Bulgarian claims, since, by sending its political agent, the Bosnian Catholic and supporter of Illyrianism Stefan Verković, to Serres in 1850, Serbia had set itself to the task of bringing about the national awakening of the Slavs of Macedonia, a process which was, however, assuming a Bulgarian aspect²⁰. Rakovski thus easily turned against the political representatives of the Greek government, believing that the

17. *Dunavski Lebed*, 1 November 1860.

18. The dynamic phase of the Bulgarian struggle is deemed to have started on 3 April 1860, Easter Day, when, during the Resurrection service in the Bulgarian Church of St Stephen in Constantinople, Ilarion Makariopolski refused to mention the Oecumenical Patriarch, replacing his name with the Sultan's.

19. See S. Terzić, *Srbija i Grčka 1856-1903: Borba za Balkan*, Belgrade 1992, p. 103.

20. For Verković's reports to the Serbian government in the period 1868-1875, see A. Rajkova, *Stefan Verković i Bálgarite*, Sofia 1978.

national ideology of the Greek state, the so-called Great Idea, was based on the ideals of the Phanariots.

The now free Greece, although it has managed to liberate itself and already has its own small kingdom, nonetheless has never forgotten the Phanariots' first idea, which they now call the Great Hellenic Idea, and has never severed its secret relations with the Phanariot clergy. The free Greeks' greatest hope is the Phanariot clergy! And for this reason, when the famous scholarly theologian Farmakidis learnt that the Bulgarians had already rejected the Phanariot patriarchate en masse, he suffered a sudden stroke and died as though struck by a thunderbolt. For this reason, the Bulgarian question is being openly discussed and examined during the sessions of the Greek senate, so that it may be stifled and become a thing of the past! Our Bulgarians must be well aware of this and take the necessary steps in whatever they do²¹.

Rakovski was an ardent supporter of Dimitâr Miladinov, a teacher at Struga, Kilkis, and Ohrid, and a major spokesman for the Bulgarian awakening in the wider area of Macedonia. At the urging of the Russian Slavist Viktor Grigorović, Miladinov and his brother Konstantin made a selection of Bulgarian folksongs from Macedonia, which Strossmayer published in Zagreb in 1861. Rakovski attributed Dimitâr Miladinov's arrest by the Ottoman authorities in February 1861 to a conspiracy by the "cunning and godless Phanariots" who persecuted the Bulgarian teachers, accusing them of being Russian agents and agitators bent on preventing the awakening of the Bulgarians²².

Despite his distrust of the Greeks, in the spring of 1863 Rakovski went to Athens with a diplomatic delegation. He had been sent by the Serbian ruler, Mihajlo Obrenović, to sound out the political situation in Greece with a view to making preparations for a general Balkan uprising. In Athens, he met Voulgaris—who was acting as regent after the expulsion of Otto—Admiral Kanaris, and representatives of the army. He averred that in the event of war with Turkey, more than 20,000 Bulgarians would rise up against the Turks²³. But the political

21. *Dunavski Lebed*, 6 October 1860.

22. *Dunavski Lebed*, 18 April 1861. For Rakovski's relations with the protagonists of the Bulgarian national movement in the wider area of Macedonia, see V. Trajkov, "Georgi Rakovski i Makedonija", *Makedonski Pregled* 4 (2000) 5-24.

23. See M. Arnaudov, *Poeti i Geroi na Bălgarskoto Văzraždane*, Sofia 1965, p. 173. In

situation in Greece after Otto's expulsion was characterized by the keen political strife between the Mountain and the Plain; and since the most important domestic issue was who would succeed Otto, no-one was giving any thought to a confrontation with Turkey. Furthermore, Rakovski perceived strong English influence in Greece after the Crimean War. In a report to Belgrade, he stressed that England was emphasizing the threat of Panslavism, as Russia was laying claim to Constantinople and consequently opposing Great Greece²⁴. Furthermore, according to Rakovski, Greece's regular army was no more than 4,000 strong, and England, being true to the dogma of the integrity of the Ottoman Empire, was not encouraging Greece to go to war with Turkey and favoured the country's internal re-organization.

After a couple of months in Athens, he judged his mission to have failed, because, after the election of George and the cession of the Ionian Islands, English influence in Athens was so strong that the Greeks believed that they would achieve their "Great Greece as far as the Danube" only with England's support²⁵.

After the failure of his mission, Rakovski abandoned any notion of collaboration with Greece and accused even the Serbs of being enemies of the Bulgarians, since the Serbs were seeking to impose their

Athens, he also met the Bulgarian Marko Balabanov, then a student of medicine at Athens University, and revealed that he had come to Greece after an agreement between the rulers of Serbia and Montenegro regarding preparations for an anti-Turkish uprising in the Balkans, in which the Bulgarians ought also to take part.

24. Report by Rakovski (Athens, 23 March 1863) to the government in Belgrade, *Arhiv na G. S. Rakovski*, vol. I, *op.cit.*, p. 402.

25. Report by Rakovski (Athens, April 1863) to the government in Belgrade, *Arhiv na G. S. Rakovski*, vol. I, *op.cit.*, pp. 404-405. Disheartened by his visit to Greece, Rakovski told Canini, an Italian revolutionary who, after 1848, fled to Greece and visited various Balkan countries lobbying for inter-Balkan collaboration and a concerted uprising against Austria and Turkey, "There is nothing to be done here. ... The Greeks only think of finding a European princelet who would deign to command them. Italy has abandoned us. France does not concern herself with us, as if the key to the Balkans were not in our hands. Europe does not recognize us. ... However, the Bulgarians are honest and brave! ... I must address myself there, where there is at least a glimmer of hope." See L. S. Stavrianos, *Balkan Federation: A History of the Movement Toward Balkan Unity in Modern Times*, Archon Books, Hamden, Connecticut 1964, p. 89, n. 18. For Canini's activity in the Balkans, see Antonis Liakos, *Risorgimento και Μεγάλη Ιδέα. Ελληνοϊταλικές πολιτικές και ιδεολογικές σχέσεις 1859-1862*, doctoral thesis, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, *Επιστημονική Επετηρίς Φιλοσοφικής Σχολής*, Supplement-No. 42, Thessaloniki 1984, pp. 191-193.

hegemony over the southern Slavs. He supported the idea of Bulgaro-Romanian collaboration and published the periodical *Budušnost-Viitorul* in Bulgarian and Romanian in Bucharest. He and Prince Alexander Cuza presented a united front against the Oecumenical Patriarchate, because the question had arisen of the confiscation and nationalization by the Romanian government of the property of the monasteries belonging to the Oecumenical Patriarchate²⁶. Having experienced the intense political strife in Greece after Otto's expulsion, he described the Greeks as an uncivilized and politically immature nation, who were making ambitious plans to the detriment of other nations without being able to impose order in their own state.

Once they had overthrown King Otto, the Greeks immediately showed the entire civilized world that not only are they incapable of governing themselves, but they are the last in Europe with regard to culture. Anyone who has studied or witnessed this period in the free, fictitiously civilized Greece is certain that such barbaric, inhuman, even unnatural events took place there the very thought of which would make one's hair stand on end! The European press has written much on this subject, while the diplomatic world has openly stated that this nation is not mature enough to govern itself.

The defenders of the Greeks attributed it to the general anarchy that has reigned in that country for so long, and promised the world that once order was restored and the new king had arrived it would all cease and calm down. Yet almost a year since their new king was elected and appointed and six months since he arrived in Athens and took the helm of state, things have not changed one whit. The civil strife, theft, and daylight robbery have not stopped at all. ... All this shows to what a pass

26. The Romanian state confiscated the monasteries' property without consulting the Oecumenical Patriarchate as provided for in the Treaty of Paris of 1858. The state rented out the land and enjoyed the usufruct, the monasteries were obliged to provide lodging for the poor and disabled and to be used by the army, logging began in the forests owned by the monasteries, many Greek abbots were removed from their posts, and it was forbidden to conduct the liturgy in Greek, apart from in the Greek church at Brajla. The Patriarchate protested to the Sublime Porte and to Russia, which latter proposed that an arbitration committee be set up. But, having the support of France and Sardinia, Romania essentially brought the issue to a close at the end of 1863 by paying 51 million piastres in compensation. See V. Grosul and E. Certan, *Rossija i Formirovanije Ruminskogo Nezavisimogo Gosudarstva*, Moscow 1969, pp. 129-133.

*free Greece has come and how ridiculous the Panhellenists are, bothering other nations with their Great chimerical Idea*²⁷.

In an effort to undermine the glorious historical foundation underpinning the Greeks' national pride, Rakovski denigrates the historical continuity of the Greek people and denies that the ancient Macedonians were Greeks. According to him, the Greeks were victors in history because of the Greek language, which was disseminated throughout the Roman Empire and became the language of Christianity.

Anyone with a good knowledge of history, which is to say anyone who approaches it in a critical spirit, is well aware that the people who once bore the name of Hellene or Greek declared right from the start their intention high-handedly to create and merge unto themselves a large number of people, to the detriment of other peoples; to impose the name of Greeks upon them and to show the world a large Greek nation. This high-handed and violent process in those dark times was indeed successful to a degree; but when the nations around them became stronger and awoke, that Greek nation not only collapsed rapidly, losing its independence, but the once oppressed foreign element returned to its ethnic kinsfolk. There was then left only a small number of Hellenized people, who now regarded themselves as the great Greek nation. This lasted until Greece was brought under Macedonian, non-Greek domination. Having lost its independence, the Greek element then started to merge with the other ethnic groups.

After Macedonian rule, they were subjected to Roman dominion, under which they remained for so many centuries, and which was the most bitter, because they even lost their national name of "Hellenes" or "Greeks" and became "Romaioi". However, they could not get the notion of creating a great nation or, in other words, the Great Idea of Panhellenism, out of their heads, for all kinds of fantasies remained in their scholarly language. They tirelessly hatched all manner of schemes against the Roman state and believed that by disseminating the language they would one day achieve their great ambition. When Christianity appeared, they added religion to their armoury, brought about the schism between the churches, and in the tenth century eventually introduced

27. *Buduštnost*, 22 March 1864.

their language into the Byzantine state, which was put together out of a congeries of peoples. The Great Idea of Panhellenism then gleamed in their eyes; but the neighbouring peoples, principally the refractory Bulgarians, were the greatest obstacle. They were not susceptible to being Hellenized, and Turkish dominion temporarily checked this great Greek notion.

Nonetheless, the remnants of this high-handed policy lay dormant in the minds of the Romaioi and were ever rekindled by their scholarly tradition. Having their shared faith as an appropriate weapon, they did not cease, albeit under Turkish rule, to elaborate their old plan of disseminating Panhellenism to the detriment of the other ethnic groups in Turkey and the Romanian Danubian principalities. And the means were as follows: supplanting the other languages and forcibly imposing the Greek language, reviling and depreciating the other nationalities in the most atrocious way, usurping the religious rights of the other peoples, and forcibly imposing their own clergy.

And after the liberation of the modern Greek land, the great dreams and the golden fantasies emerged: the restoration of a great and powerful Greece with borders from the River Euphrates to the Carpathians and, most ridiculous of all, this fantasy Greek kingdom extended as far as the Caucasus!

All the other nationalities were swallowed up in the profound abyss of Panhellenism: such as the Karamanlids, the Arvanites, the Macedono-Romanians, the Bulgarians, the Serbs with the Bosnians and Hercegovinans (there was no mention of the Montenegrins); and the strangest thing is that the independent Romanian principalities were also adopted by this great Greece!

All these things have been seriously written by many old and modern Greek writers, and their press proclaimed Panhellenism and continues to proclaim it before the entire world, defining two Greeces, one visible, the other invisible!²⁸

But Rakovski went even further. In an attempt to belittle the importance of the Greek language, he resorted to myth, asserting that Bulgarian was older than Greek and came from Sanskrit²⁹, harking back

28. *Buduštnost*, 29 March 1864.

29. See V. Trajkov, *Rakovski i Balkanskite Narodi*, Sofia 1971, p. 382.

to the Bulgarian monk of the mediaeval Bulgarian state Chrabr and his views about the Greek and Slavonic alphabets.

Accusing the Greeks of ethnocentrism and hegemonism in the Balkans, he excluded them from a potential alliance of Serbs, Bulgarians, and Romanians for a resolution of the Eastern Question, unless they abandoned their Great Idea³⁰.

Rakovski did not manage to secure political and military support from the Romanian government, especially after Charles ascended the Romanian throne in 1866. Romania had no reason to become embroiled in a war with the Ottoman Empire, as it was not laying any direct claim to Ottoman territory and the main issue in its relations with the Sublime Porte was recognition of its independence. Eventually, Rakovski realized that the Bulgarians would have to fend for themselves. He spent his final days rallying his compatriots to the cause of national liberation.

Having followed the development of Rakovski's views about the Greeks, we can now proceed to a general appraisal. Instilled with Greek education and consorting with Greeks, he regarded the Greeks as a model for the Bulgarians, emphasising above all their patriotism, love of learning, and solidarity when the circumstances called for it. Once he had moved into political action on behalf of the Bulgarian national awakening, he gradually came to regard the Greeks as the Bulgarians' adversaries. The graecomania of the wealthy Bulgarians posed an obstacle to the Bulgarian national cause and he attributed it to a well thought-out plan by the Oecumenical Patriarchate to "Hellenize" the Balkan peoples. Rakovski soon turned his fire on the political forces in the Greek state, whose "Great Idea" he regarded as a fantasy invented by the Phanar. Two views of what constitutes a "nation" conflicted in this Greek-Bulgarian controversy: the Greek view, which, owing to the strong Greek cultural tradition and the assimilatory influence of the Greeks, regards the nation principally as a cultural entity, irrespective of the ethnic origin of its members; and the Bulgarian perception, which is basically a copy of the German school and attaches considerable importance to language and ancestry³¹. Thus, true to the spirit of national

30. *Buduštnost*, 29 March 1864.

31. The Greek-Bulgarian conflict over the concept of the nation basically reflects the French-German conflict. In a letter to a German colleague after Prussia had annexed Alsace-Lorraine in 1871, Renan put his finger on the difference between the French and the German

romanticism, Rakovski and the entire Bulgarian intelligentsia of the nineteenth century believed that Macedonia, the focal point of the discord between Greeks and Slavs, was inhabited by Bulgarians, identifying every Slavonic-speaking or bilingual inhabitant as Bulgarian. The Greeks (like the other Balkan peoples) had no historical rights, for they had no solid demographic base³². Rakovski accused the Greeks of excessive commitment to their Great Idea, but himself was a vehicle of an expansionist Bulgarian nationalism. As the Bulgarian Balkanologist Krăšte Mančev has pointed out, the agents of the Bulgarian renaissance had no clear idea of the boundaries of the future Bulgarian state³³, simply accusing the other Balkan peoples of hegemonism.

Affected by the political events in Greece after the expulsion of Otto, Rakovski accuses the Greeks of anarchy. He fails to discern in these struggles—which were waged principally for the constitutional governance of the country—a degree of political awakening and democratic political culture on the Greeks' part. After all, in Western Europe too, especially in France, a country with a tradition of democracy, political and social strife was no rare phenomenon. Among the Bulgarians, by contrast, after the birth of the Bulgarian state in 1878, the political struggles were uninspired and listless, with the result that, despite the existence of a liberal constitution from 1879, Prince Alexander of Battenberg imposed an autocratic regime (1881-1883), the Prime Minister, Stefan Stambolov (1887-1894), a real dictatorship, and King Ferdinand (1908) a "personal regime".

conception: "Instead of the criteria of liberal policy, you have established in our world such ethnographical and archaeological policies as will ultimately seal your own fate. What will be your answer if one day the Slavs come and lay claim to Prussia, Pomerania, Silesia and Berlin, simply on the grounds that these place-names are Slavonic, if they behave on the banks of the Oder as you are now behaving on the banks of the Moselle, if, on the basis of some map or other, they point to villages that were once inhabited by Slavs? ... Germany has mounted a mettlesome steed that will bear her to places where she has no wish to go." See H. Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism: From the Middle Ages to the Present* (tr. from the original German), Oxford 1996, p. 322.

32. For the views of the Bulgarian intelligentsia regarding the other Balkan peoples, chiefly in relation to Macedonia, see the collection *Bălgarite i sāseditē narodi v publičistikata na Rakovski, Karavelov, Botev, Javorov*, edited by Ivan Nikolov, Makedonija Pres, Sofia 1996.

33. See Dimitrov and Mančev, *op.cit.*, p. 428.

It would be trite to refute Rakovski's views by analyzing the terms "Hellene", "Greek", and "Romaïos", resorting to the writings of Plethon and Chalkokondyles, or marshalling arguments in support of the Greekness of the ancient Macedonians. It is nonetheless obvious that, try as he might to play down the historical continuity of Hellenism, essentially he did acknowledge certain criteria which preserved historical continuity and, most important, he did not deny the Hellenic character of Byzantium, at least from the tenth century onwards. Of course, we should not expect Rakovski to have been profoundly knowledgeable about Byzantine history at a time when Gibbon's views on Byzantium were still influential. Undoubtedly Rakovski, who kept abreast of developments in Greece, knew about the historicism of the Greek intelligentsia since 1850, most notably Spyridon Zembelios and Konstantinos Paparigopoulos, who in the aftermath of Fallmerayer's theory were seeking to assert the constant parameters of Hellenism within its continuity, to reinstate despised Byzantium, and to outline the messianic role which the Greeks could assume as the chosen people. But for Rakovski, reference to Byzantium served other ends: he identified Byzantium with intrigue and machinations and regarded it as the ideological embryo of the Phanariots, whom he held responsible for the Bulgarians' graecomania and obscurantism. Thus he did not vindicate Byzantium historically, but condemned it.

Presumably, by denying that the ancient Macedonians were Greeks, Rakovski felt that he was assisting the Bulgarians' struggle for an autocephalous church. The struggle over the historical legacy of the name "Macedonia" was already under way in the nineteenth century, as the Greeks contested its appropriation by the Slavs. This is reflected in a letter from Konstantin Miladinov, who published Bulgarian folksongs from Macedonia, to Rakovski, dated 31 January 1861:

On my order form I have called Macedonia "Western Bulgaria", as it should be called, because the Greeks in Vienna are ordering us around like sheep. They want Macedonia to be Greek territory and still do not realize that it cannot be Greek. But what are we to do with the more than two million Bulgarians there? Shall the Bulgarians still be sheep and a few Greeks the shepherds? Those days are gone and the Greeks shall be left with no more than their sweet dream. I believe the songs will be distributed among the Bulgarians, and have therefore set a low price for

them³⁴.

In the final analysis, Rakovski's attitude towards the Greeks must be judged in the light of his time. Having acquired Bulgarian consciousness himself, he strove, armed with his broad education, to transmit it to his compatriots, liberating them from the influence of Hellenism. In this national call to arms, the dividing line between myth and historical fact was often blurred or even non-existent (for instance, the Sanskrit origin of Slavonic), because what mattered was the functional aspect of the myth. At a political level, Rakovski was aware of the insuperable difficulties involved in achieving the Bulgarians' liberation and inter-Balkan co-operation. The Greeks, the Serbs, and the Romanians had established their own nation-states and were prudent in their political moves, since they were now engaged in foreign policy; whereas Rakovski was still living in a climate of revolutionary ferment. He did not receive the political support he wanted from the Greeks or the Serbs, and this resulted in an inferiority complex that found expression in an aggressive attitude towards the Greeks and the Serbs. But his efforts did meet with a response from his compatriots. The entire Bulgarian community of Bucharest attended his funeral. In 1885 his remains were ceremoniously transferred to Sofia and in 1942, in accordance with his final wishes, they were re-interred in his native town of Kotel. Essentially, along with most of the Bulgarian intellectuals of the nineteenth century, Rakovski himself incubated the Bulgarian hegemonism that remained an ossified doctrine of Bulgarian foreign policy until the First World War and prevented any creative collaboration with the other Balkan peoples (especially over the question of dividing up Macedonia), leading Bulgaria to national disasters³⁵.

34. See *Makedonija. Istorija i političeska sâdba*, vol. 1 (edited by P. Petrov), Sofia 1994, p. 190. Also Arnaudov, *op.cit.*, p. 369.

35. This is illustrated by Stambolov's reaction to Trikoupis's proposals, on the latter's visit to Sofia in June 1891. He rejected the proposal for inter-Balkan co-operation, rejected the idea of dividing up Macedonia, and, through the Bulgarian chargé d'affaires in Constantinople, informed the Sublime Porte of the content of the discussion for his own political gain. "I conclude from my discussion with Trikoupis that Montenegro, Serbia, and Greece are in complete agreement for joint action in Macedonia, and when the time is right these rabid wolves will pounce upon the Turkish corpse. Trikoupis did not conceal his plan of action from me. ... He asserts that the Greek fleet is now so strong that not a single Turkish soldier may enter the theatre of war, ... consequently Greece may act in full certainty of success.

Rakovski envisioned a homogeneous Bulgarian nation-state. He considered inter-Balkan co-operation necessary in so far as it served Bulgarian interests³⁶. Since the Bulgarians were at a different point in their history from the other Balkan peoples, the idea of a Balkan federation was not central to his political thinking. Nonetheless, Rakovski was a *Homo balcanicus*, familiar with almost all the Balkan languages, moving freely between Bulgaria, Constantinople, Athens, Cetinje, Belgrade, and Bucharest. In this respect, since efforts are being made to effect an inter-Balkan rapprochement today and the functional nature of the nation-state is changing, Rakovski remains as relevant as ever.

Trikoupis assured me that he will take office next February; but he told me that if Bulgaria joins the alliance, he could take office in December or November, so as to lose no time in dividing up Macedonia. I replied that we find ourselves in such difficult circumstances that we cannot but favour the status quo, that we are afraid that in the event of a serious clash with Turkey Russia will seize the opportunity to take Burgas or Varna and then we shall lose the certain for the hypothetical. [Author's note: Russia severed diplomatic relations with Bulgaria between 1886 and 1896 and Stambolov was following an anti-Russian, pro-Austrian policy. After the Russian veto, the new prince of Bulgaria, Ferdinand, who succeeded Alexander of Battenburg, was refused recognition by the Sublime Porte and the other Great Powers.] If Bulgaria joins the alliance, it will have to guard a front 400-500 kilometres long and the Turks will very soon be able to attack Eastern Rumelia with an army of 200,000 men, and before we manage to get any of Macedonia they will seize Rumelia. It will be much better for the present for all of us small states to seek to persuade the Turks and our friends to introduce into Macedonia the reforms laid down by the Treaty of Berlin. Trikoupis was not at all pleased by this last point. He does not want reforms in Macedonia, he wants us to divide it up. For me, this is the clearest proof of what we have achieved in Macedonia and of how disappointed the Serbs and Greeks are now that they losing it once and for all. ... This is why I consider it necessary that you see the Sultan and explain to him the great jeopardy menacing the Empire. If you find that the Sultan cannot receive you soon, tell the Grand Vizier all that Trikoupis told me and proposed to me, and request an answer to our proposal regarding the Sofia-Kjustendil-Kumanovo railway line and a military agreement. If within one week of your receiving this letter they have not given you an affirmative reply, I charge you to withdraw our proposals and make it known that Bulgaria reserves the right to act with complete freedom in the event of complications in Macedonia." See *Nacionalno-osvoboditelno dvizhenie na Makedonskite i Trakijskite Bălgari 1878-1944*, vol. I, *Borbi za zapazvane na edinstvoto na bălgarskata nacija 1878-1893*, Makedonski Naucen Institute, Sofia 1994, p. 237.

36. For the plan to liberate Bulgaria with the co-operation of Greece, Serbia, and Montenegro which Rakovski drew up in 1858, see M. Todorova, *Podbrani izvori za istorijata na balkanskite narodi XV-XIX vek*, Sofia 1977, pp. 343-345. Rakovski expressed the opinion that the Greeks and the Serbs had rebelled in less favourable circumstances and with fewer means.