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PHILHELLENISM IN POLAND DURING THE GREEK REVOLUTION 1821-1828

The Greek Revolution of 1821-1828 against the yoke of the Ottoman Empire generated a strong current of philhellenism in many countries, including Poland.

In Poland the situation was peculiar. Indeed, the Polish people was living at that time, under the rule of Prussia, Russia and Austria that were absolutist powers against any idea of revolution. The pro-Greek feeling of the Polish people was contrary to the attitude of the authorities.

Polish people expressed their pro-Greek sentiments mainly through the press that published correspondence from revolutionary Greeks together with warm comments, but also through the work of various writers. Last but not least we should mention the Poles who fought and died for the independence of Greece.

The entire Polish press, mainly of Warsaw, Krakow and Vilnius, where the right of free expression was less restricted, ranked among the friends of Greece. Correspondence about the revolution was printed abundantly. Special articles were published, about the slaughter of the Chios islanders, the destruction of Psara island, the victory of Dervenakia, the achievements of heroes like Miaoulis and Kanaris, the battle of Peta, the naval battle of Navarino...

"From the one side bigotry causes slaughter, from the other misfortune aims either to victory or death" reports the newspaper "Bee of Krakow" (2nd volume p. 296). "The residents of the island (Chios), this peaceloving people, became victims of the barbarian Ottoman hordes" according to "Warsaw Voice" (1822 A/35).

Although news from Greece was not abundant, the papers enriched it with comments and information about the traditions, the history and the culture of the Hellenes.

Together with the newspapers literary journals also published special supplements about Greece. One of the most interesting among them is the journal *Rszczolka Krakowska* (1822). A number of historical books were

published also e.g. the one "The Rebirth of Greece" by W. Krug and "Theodora" by A. Scaden. Borkowski, a well known translator, writer and poet, published "The 19 Byronic hymns" about the Greek revolutionaries and the poem "The Ship". I. Oposzko wrote the poem "In Memoriam of Lord Byron". The future national poet of Poland Adam Mickiewicz, young then, was influenced by the revolution, as was the famous poet Slowacki. His works "The Journey", "Ode for Freedom" and the poem "Lambros" were inspired by the struggle of Greece for freedom. We may also cite the poets Krasinski and Norwid although the works of the latter about Greece were published later.

The Professor of ancient greek at the University of Vilnius, Groddeck, wrote a number of works about Greece influencing the literary and political circles of his time. We may also mention the young poets Coszczynski, Spitznagel and especially F. Morawski. From the poem of the latter "Fever for fight during the Greek war", I cite the following verses: "Hellenes, Hellenes, sons of glory / Who govern the world history / Why in the name of God a Pole / Cannot assist you in your struggle?".

Answering the question, a number of Polish volunteers went and fought for the independence of Greece. Captains Zurowski and Garnowski fought together with the head of the revolution Alexandros Ipsilantis who deserved the name of the Macedonian ancestor that he carried. J. Dzierzawski took part in the siege of Messolonghi. The Polish major in the Russian army Grabowski was distinguished in many expeditions in the Morias. Polish officers Drowski and Molodowski survived the massacre in Peta (July 4th, 1822) but others did not. Mierzejewski, Dabronowski, Koulselewski, Molodowski perished together with 9 other Polish heroes. Officer Miodowicki was distinguished during the siege of Tripolitsa. Jerjawski fought against the Ottomans until the final victory.

During the revolution, especially after the defeat at Messolonghi fund raising was organised in enslaved Poland for the struggle of Greece to buy arms, ammunition, medicines etc.

Poles who strove through pen or sword for Greek independence, strove also for their own freedom. The independence of Greece was the harbinger of independence for Poland. The bonds linking the two nations originated from the contacts with the Polish Commonwealth and were strengthened even before 1821 when Greek immigrants who escaped the Ottoman rule settled in Poland. A number of Poles also took refuge in Greece after its liberation, especially after the revolutions of 1830, 1848 and 1863. The two nations fought together in both the two World Wars.

Today, in the new Europe, Poland has a significant role to play. In the framework of the emerging Europe the traditional Greek-Polish friendship will certainly be strengthened for the benefit of the two countries, Europe and all the world.