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GEORGI S. RAKOVSKI IN WALLACHIA (1855). TWO GREEK DOCUMENTS¹

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Georgi Stoikov Rakovski (1821–1867) was a prominent revolutionary figure of the 19th century Bulgaria and more broadly the Balkans, who served Bulgarian nationalism both with “pen” and “sword”. His life and his ideas have, justifiably enough, attracted historical interest which resulted in the production of a voluminous and well-rounded bibliography.² Despite, however, the intensive and ongoing research on Rakovski’s life and activities, there still remain many unanswered questions and “gaps” in our knowledge for certain phases of his life, one of which is his sojourn in Wallachia in 1855–1856. The aim of my short contribution to this volume is to present two documents which testify to Rakovski’s acquisition of the Greek citizenship in 1843.

It is well-known that in December 1854, after several months of leadership of an armed force of young Bulgarians in the Balkan Mountains, waiting in vain the Russian army to cross the Danube, and hiding afterwards at his hometown, Kotel (Summer -December 1854), Rakovski decided to go to Wallachia.³ One can presume that his prior arrest as a Russian spy, in 1853, had made him not only reluctant and cautious, but also attentive to the fact that the Ottoman Empire was a highly dangerous place for revolutionary preparation. This was probably the reason why he chose to move to Wallachia; to seek a more auspicious environment for his political and cultural agenda.

¹ I would like to thank the Director and the personnel of the Service of Diplomatic and Historical Archives, Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs for their help.

² See, among others, Veselin Traikov, *Georgi Stojkov Rakovski. Biografija*, Sofia, Bălgarska Akademija na Naukite, Institut za Balkanistika, 1974 and Mari A. Firkatian, *The Forest Traveler: Georgi Stoikov Rakovski and Bulgarian Nationalism*, New York, Peter Lang, 1996.

³ Traikov, *Georgi Stojkov Rakovski*, 111–115 and Firkatian, *The Forest Traveler*, 41–45.

The fact, however, that the Danubian Principalities in 1855 were under the double Habsburg-ottoman occupation, undermined the potential of any political undertaking. Those Greeks and Bulgarians who had supported the Russians in Wallachia, by, for instance, financing or participating in voluntary legions, which were later incorporated to the Russian army,⁴ were harassed by the authorities.⁵ It was only natural that Rakovski decided to keep a low profile, which partly explains the insufficiency of information and written sources for this period of his life. Wallachia not being hospitable to Rakovski's plans, the Bulgarian revolutionary decided to move to Serbia and afterwards to Novi Sad, a flourishing centre of Serbian letters.

In order to facilitate his entrance in Serbia, and to secure himself from a contingent extradition to the Ottoman authorities, Rakovski applied, in September of 1855, to the General Consulate of Greece in Bucharest for the issuance of a new passport, as he had lost his previous one, issued in Athens. He declared that he had been in Wallachia for ten months, since his arrival there a few days after the New Year's in 1855. Konstantinos Fostiropoulos, the secretary of the Consulate transmitted promptly Rakovski's request to the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, asking for verification from the Municipality of Athens.

On the 16th of October 1855, the Municipality informed the Greek authorities that Rakovski had indeed been registered as a citizen of Athens on the 9th of July in 1843. This confirmation on behalf of the registry office is important as it reveals with accuracy that Rakovski had been in Athens in the summer of 1843 and maybe even earlier, although he himself mentions in his autobiographical notes that he arrived at the Greek capital in 1844.⁶

The acquisition of various "protections" and their use according to the circumstances used to be a common practice in the Balkans until the last quarter of the 19th century. It was highly popular amongst the merchants, who wanted to benefit from the various privileges accompanying each country's citizenship.⁷ Rakovski, nonetheless, obtained the Greek and later Russian citizenship in order to facilitate his political endeavors. He had acquired his first Greek passport in

⁴ For the Greek Volunteers see Maria N. Todorova, «The Greek Volunteers in the Crimean War», *Balkan Studies* 25/2 (1984), 539–564.

⁵ The Diplomatic and Historical Archive (D.H.A) of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs provides ample documentation for the prosecution of those who had cooperated with the Russians during the Russian occupation of the Principalities. See for example, D.H.A., folder 36.5a/1855, Greek Consulates in the Danubian Principalities. For the Austrian occupation of the Principalities see Leonid Boicu, *Austria și Principatele Române în vremea războiului Crimeii 1853–1856*, Bucharest, Editura Academiei Române, 1972.

⁶ *Arhiv na G. S. Rakovski*, v. I, Pisma i räkopisi na Rakovski, Sofia, Bălgarska Akademija na Naukite, 1952, p. 496. For this complicated subject see Traikov, *Georgi Stojkov Rakovski*, p. 83.

⁷ See Cornelia Papacostea-Danielopolu, «Une citoyenneté empirique: le statut des marchands étrangers en Valachie (1829–1859)», *Actes du IIe Colloque international d'Histoire, Économies méditerranéennes: Équilibres et intercommunications XIIIe–XIXe siècles*, v. III, Athens 1986, 205–216.

the August of 1841 by the Greek Vice-Consul in Braila Ioannis Velissarios.⁸ Having, however, been issued for a short period and not according to the law which provided for the candidate's enrolment to the registry of any municipality in free Greece, the passport was not valid. This was, probably, the reason why he issued a new one in 1843.

It is worth mentioning that, although Rakovski had the Greek citizenship, he did not, as far as we know, use it when he was charged and sentenced to three years (1844–1847) imprisonment by the ottoman authorities for fomenting a revolt. Still, it seems that a Greek passport had not outlived its usefulness, and therefore Rakovski renewed it in 1855, as it is proven by the documents below, and again in 1857 (from the Greek General Consulate of Vienna).⁹ It is worth mentioning, that in the beginning of the autumn of 1857, when Rakovski was questioned by the Austrian authorities, he pleaded Greek protection, in order to avoid his extradition to the Ottoman Empire.¹⁰ A year later, in 1858, Rakovski became a Russian citizen, adding the Russian “protection” to the “useful tools”, which would facilitate his revolutionary plans.

Annex:

1.

Rakovskis' Application

Ἀντίγραφον Τὸ ἐν Βλαχία Γενικὸν Προξενεῖον τῆς Ἑλλάδος.
Ὁ ὑποφαινόμενος Γεώργιος Σ. Ρακόβσκης δημότης Ἀθηνῶν λαμβάνω τὴν τιμὴν νὰ ἀναφέρω εἰς τὴν Σεβαστὴν ταύτην ἀρχὴν ὅτι εὐρισκομένος ἐνταῦθα εἰς Βλαχίαν πρὸ δέκα μηνῶν καὶ ἀπωλέσας τὸ ἐξωτερικὸν διαβατήριόν μου ἐξ Ἀθηνῶν παρακαλῶ τὸ Γεν. τοῦτο Προξενεῖον ὅπως εὐαρεστηθῆ νὰ γράψῃ εἰς τὸ Β. Ὑπουργεῖον ὅπως ἐξετάσῃ νὰ εὐρεθῆ τὸ δημοτικὸν μου γενομένης ἐρεῦνης εἰς τὰ ληξιαρχικὰ βιβλία ἀπὸ τὸ 1842 μέχρι τοῦ 1844 καὶ νὰ μοι σταλῆ ἐνταῦθα.

μένω μὲ τὸ ἀνήκον Σέβας Εὐπειθέστατος Ὑπήκοος (ὑπογ)
Γεώργιος Σ. Ρακόβσκης

Βουκ. τῆ 1 Σεπτεμβρίου 1855

Copy. The General Consulate of Greece in Wallachia

The undersigned Georgios S. Rakovski, citizen of Athens has the honour to inform this honourable Authority that during his stay here in Wallachia for ten months now, he lost his passport issued in Athens. He would therefore beg

⁸ Veselin Traikov, *Rakovski i balkanskite narodi*, Sofija, Nauko i Izkustvo, 1971, 321–325.

⁹ *Arhiv na G. S. Rakovski*, tom II, Pisma do Rakovski, Sofia, Bălgarska Akademija na Naukite, 1957, p. 192.

¹⁰ *Arhiv na G. S. Rakovski*, v. I, p. 493. Firkatian, *The Forest Traveler*, p. 55, 59.

the General Consulate to ask the Royal Ministry to inquire for his registration into the Register of citizenship from 1842 to 1844 and have the information dispatched here.

With due respect,

I am Sir, your obedient Subject

(signature) Georgios S. Rakovski

Bucharest, on the 1st of September 1855.

2.

Αντίγραφον. Αριθμός 6072/Δ. 3323. Έν Αθήναις τὴν 16 (8βρίου) Οκτωβρίου 1855 ἐπὶ τοῦ ἀριθμοῦ 12.757. Πρὸς τὴν Β. Νομαρχίαν Ἀττικῆς καὶ Βοιωτίας, Περὶ τῆς δημοτογραφήσεως τοῦ Γεωργίου Σ. Ρακόβσκη.

Κατὰ τὴν ὑπὸ τὸν ἀπέναντι ἀριθμὸν ἐν ἐπισημειώσει καὶ ἐπιστρεφόμενης διαταγῆν πληροφορῶ τὴν Β. Νομαρχίαν ὅτι ὁ ἐν τῇ περιλήψει σημειούμενος ὑπάρχει ἐγγεγραμμένος δημότης Ἀθηναίων ὡς ἑξῆς.

α Στοιχεῖον Ρ' ἀριθμὸς 37. 1843 Ἰουλίου 9. Ρακόβσκη Σ. Γεώργιος, Βουλγαρία, ἐτῶν 23, Μαθητῆς. ἄγαμος, αὐτεξούσιος». Εὐπειθέστατος Ὁ Δήμαρχος Ἀθηναίων Κ. Γαλάτης

Copy. No. 6072/Δ. 3323, Athens, October 16, 1855, reference 12.575, To the Royal Prefecture of Athens and Boiotia, on Georgios S. Rakovski's registration.

In response to the herewith returned order, I inform the royal Prefecture that the name mentioned in the summary is registered as a citizen of Athens as follows:

Letter R', number 37. 1843 July 9, Rakovski S. Georgios, Bulgaria, 23 years old, student, not married, adult.

Your obedient servant,

the Mayor of Athens K. Galatis.

Source:

Diplomatic and Historical Archives, Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, folder 49.1/1855.