


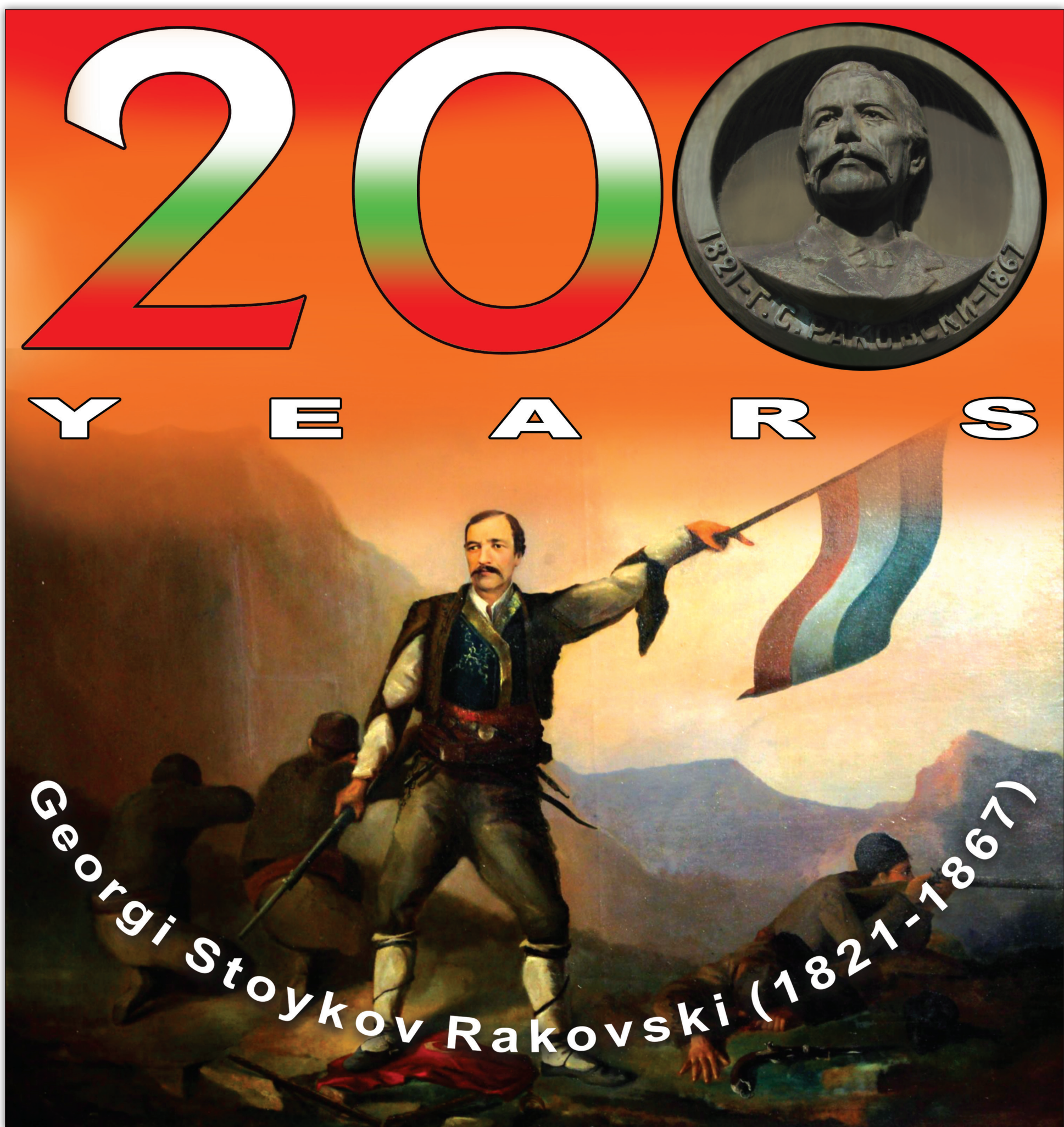
ЗА БУКВИТЕ

КИРИЛО МЕТОДИЕВСКИ ВЕСТНИК

О ПИСМЕНАХЪ



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Speeches on the Great Bulgarian



Rumen Radev
President of the Republic
of Bulgaria

I highly appreciate the patriotic initiative to solemnly celebrate the 200th anniversary of the birth of the ideologist of the Bulgarian National Revolution – Georgi Rakovski.

The unbreakable faith in the historical right of the Bulgarian people to win their statehood from the centuries-old enslaver inspired a constellation of figures of the Bulgarian Revival. Georgi Rakovski was the first to whom Bulgaria's freedom was not subject to

chance, but the result of a pre-planned national revolution.

An educator and ideologist, Rakovski was convinced that for the people's liberation deed to succeed, it was both courage and education that were needed; that the road to freedom should be walked by educated people using sense and decisiveness in leading the fight. Therefore, in April, when we celebrate the 200th anniversary of the birth of the great Bulgarian, let's remember that it was education that stood on Rakovski's pedestal of great values, for it enkindles love to the Motherland and keeps the national consciousness alive.

I am convinced that today, when we need once more the spiritual flame of the leaders of the Revival, our people will continue to follow with honor the moral legacy by Georgi Rakovski, who dedicated his life to Bulgaria's freedom.



Krasimir Karakachanov
Deputy Prime Minister for
Public Order and Security
Defense Minister of the
Republic of Bulgaria
Patron of National Celebrations

It's the 200th anniversary of the birth of the prominent Bulgarian Georgi Stoykov Rakovski. The Eminent Kotel-born Bulgarian has a leading place in our history – the people place him as a Patriarch of the organized Bulgarian Liberation Movement. His Sharp mind, the feeling for the original Bulgarian values and the consistency of his deeds raise him to the highest grounds in the pantheon of the people's faith, truth and freedom.

His vision and military-organizational activity testify that as an ideologist, strategist and founder of the

national liberation struggle against the five-century Ottoman yoke, Rakovski undoubtedly possessed an indomitable will, sparkling energy, and a broad political and military horizon. Proof of this are the plans he created in 1861 and 1867 for the liberation of Bulgaria. They clearly show his understanding of the recruitment, organization, command and discipline of the Bulgarian People's Liberation Army. Moreover, Rakovski sought and chose the bravest, best prepared and most loyal Bulgarians to fight for the freedom of Bulgaria.

Today we pay tribute to this national hero, honoring him with dignity, remembering his personal example, dedication, consistency and unwavering love for the Fatherland. I sincerely believe that the patriotism passed on to us by Georgi Rakovski will not only remain a memory of the past, but on the contrary, it will help us remember those who were born to die in the name of a great cause – Bulgaria.

This year we celebrate 200 years since the birth of Georgi Stoykov Rakovski. Undoubtedly, he is one of the greatest, bravest and strongest personalities in our national memory. That is why the great Bulgarian – scientist, poet, dreamer, visionary, will forever remain in our minds as one of the most important pre-liberation builders of modern Bulgaria.

Georgi Rakovski is among the ideologists and founders of the ideas for the Bulgarian national revolution. He was the first Bulgarian revolutionary with lasting and consistent ideas for our national liberation cause. He is a combination of will and energy, intellect and action. With his ardent journalism, with his theoretical and practically oriented works and plans, with his authority as an encyclopedic personality, Rakovski educated an entire generation who continued and further developed his work.

Let us preserve and pass on to our children the mem-



Tsveta Karayancheva
President of the National
Assembly of the Republic
of Bulgaria

ory of this great cultural historian, ethnographer, publicist and memoirist, voivode and politician – a vast and unusually great person. Let the memory of Rakovski remain for us and for future generations for him as an institution, a great, unique Bulgarian, one of the brightest incarnations of the spirit of the Bulgarian National Revival. Many of our revolutionaries and heroes fought for the freedom of the Motherland, but there is no doubt that the name of Georgi Rakovski will

always shine with special force among them.

Today he can be an example for all of us, because more than ever we need his legacy and boundless love for the Motherland – to remember that we must love Bulgaria and keep our national ideals. Rakovski will always be our true political ideal and flag, an exceptional person we can only worship and never forget. I believe that from the deeds of the great sons of Bulgaria, among whom Georgi Rakovski stands out in golden letters, we can draw strength and energy, determination and courage to cope with the challenges of the modern world. Let us remind ourselves every day that the all-Bulgarian successes and achievements would be his dream come true. Let us strive with our deeds to be worthy Bulgarians – the way he believed we would be! Eternal memory and homage to the genius and sincere patriot Georgi Rakovski!

It is with pride that I congratulate you on the occasion of organizing and holding the national celebrations dedicated to the 200th anniversary of the birth of Georgi Stoykov Rakovski. To me and the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Bulgaria, it is great responsibility to be part of the commemoration of the anniversary and the resurgence of the image of a Bulgarian who encompasses our mutual aspiration for our Motherland to thrive.

I believe that the heart of each of our compatriots is filled with great excitement even when pronouncing the name of the publicist, poet, writer, diplomat, politician, founder of our national liberation movement and a bright person, whose name the Military Academy “G. S. Rakovski” is worthy of carrying.

In the common memory of our people, his figure has always stood next to the giants Botev and Levski and still evokes a sense of pride



Boil Banov
Minister of Culture of the
Republic of Bulgaria
Patron of National Celebrations

and gratitude for his life and work. A life dedicated to the mission of protecting our national interests, of our Motherland and our people being free and developing in their own way and independently. I believe that even today we need his guidance and his belief that we are capable and can stand when we are united.

I see something deeply symbolic in this anniversary in the very year when all humanity is fighting for a new Revival, for the restoration

of our lives from the Covid-19 pandemic.

It brings joy to see that the agenda of the celebrations encompasses all age groups, for I believe that the love for Bulgaria and its worthy sons is instilled even before we step into the school, but it continues to grow even after the university graduation. That is why it is laudable that along with schools and universities like the University of Library Studies and Information Technologies, the National Library and the museum network in the country are ready to actively join the festivities.

Allow me to congratulate all partners of the initiative, which I believe will help contribute to the new Bulgarian state in line with the European values and the care for preserving the Bulgarian national identity and national memory.

I hope the anniversary edition of “Za Bukvite – O pismeneh” reaches the heart of every single true Bulgarian!

Georgi Stoykov Rakovski

It's been 200 years since the birth of the legendary revolutionary and man of letters Georgi Rakovski. The person who enlightened the way of our national Revival and gave the first beats of those dedicated to the Liberation of Bulgaria from the Ottoman Yoke. His grand work as a thinker, prominent revolutionary and spiritual leader, poet, historian, ethnographer and folklorist has turned him into one of the stellar phenomena of Bulgarian Revival history and culture in the 19th century.

His participation in all stages of the liberation movement: the struggle for an independent Bulgarian church, the subsequent enlightenment tendencies and their realization, the idea of our national revolution, reveal his extraordinary love for Bulgaria, as well as his deep belief that one must sacrifice for freedom of his people. It is no coincidence that under his leadership the beginning of the Resistance movement was set – this was a prelude to the creation of a nationwide revolutionary organization throughout the country. A kind of peak in his revolutionary aspirations were his views on the strategy and tactics of the Bulgarian na-



Prof. DSc Irena Peteva
Rector of ULSIT

tional revolution, his "Plan on Bulgaria's Liberation", the selection of the "Provisional Bulgarian Governance", the organization of the two Bulgarian legions in 1862 and 1867.

Among these are his manifestations as a poet (the poem "Forest Traveler"), his editing work of the newspapers "Bulgarian Diary", "Danube Swan", "Future", etc., a notable author of scientific and vivid journalistic research and articles in which the fundamental problem was raised of the roots and meaning of the Bulgarian spirit and culture, of the place of the Bulgarian people in the civilized world – Slavic and non-Slavic.

G. S. Rakovski wrote political reviews, prefaces, pamphlets, summarizing materials in which he touched on the situation in Bulgaria; our relations with neighboring countries; he opposed the Phanariots; he analyzed the current issues related to the policy of Constantinople and Napoleon III, the economic and political situation in Western Europe; expressed his different ideas about the liberation of the homeland; traced the role of Slavonic world in human history; examined in many ways the situation in Russia and the policy of the imperial court; emphasized in particular the importance of the "Eastern question", but also of the "Bulgarian question" in front of the Ottoman Porte.

Such a broad-minded, well-read educator and revolutionary, dreamer and prophet is the Revival figure Georgi Rakovski. Such is his civic appearance, such is his faith, which at times reaches fanaticism. Such is his perception of the fundamental categories of human existence: always and at all costs tied to national destiny.

Today we should strive to be worthy of his ideas!

2021 marks the 200th anniversary of the birth of Georgi Rakovski and 75 years since Regent's Decree №6 of 5th March, 1946 gave the Military Academy the name of a prominent figure in the Bulgarian national liberation movement – an event whose celebrations will rightly be led by the Academy. The celebrations will continue throughout the year and in addition to the scientific conference with international participation, which the Military Academy will host, these will include a roll-call ceremony and fireworks display in Rakovski's native Kotel, celebrations in Sofia, Plovdiv, Burgas, Karlovo, Rakovski and elsewhere.

The events in Rakovski's memory will be held under the patronage of Deputy Prime Minister for Public Order and Security and Minister of Defense Dr. Krassimir Karachanov and Minister of Culture Boil Banov. This is only logical, for Rakovski created the first more modern organized Bulgarian military unit, and at the same time he made attempts as a writer, publicist and ethnographer to create and highlight our identity – what he did in the field of culture laid the foundations of processes that have developed after the restoration of the Bulgarian state.

The patron of the Military Academy remains in Bulgarian history as one of the most prominent figures of the national liberation movement. An unwavering revolutionary, a major theorist and ideologist of the struggle of the Bulgarian people, he uniquely combined the then most advanced political thought with the practice of armed struggle. Rakovski examined and evaluated the experience gained from the various forms of resistance in which the Bulgarian people shed their blood for centuries, and came to the conclusion confirmed by history that the revolutionary struggle organized nationwide is the only way to abolish foreign oppression.

Rakovski's literary work is inextricably linked to his strategic insight that the revolution must be used with weapons and words, pen and sword. His cultural-historical, journalistic and literary works have a wide thematic scope. The historian's searches, the scholar's statements, the journalist's ap-

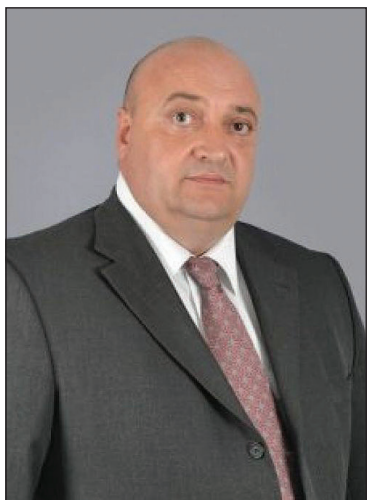


General Major
Grudi Angelov PhD –
Commandant of
"G. S. Rakovski" National
Defence College

peals, and the poet's visions are united by his all-encompassing patriotic ideal.

Having gone through almost all stages of the struggle against foreign rule, being the first to come to the idea that only through its organization and with the participation of all Bulgarians can the coveted freedom be won, Georgi Rakovski established himself as one of Bulgaria's most authoritative leaders. Although in the last 11 years of his life he did not return to Bulgaria, he became not only an undisputed political organizer and leader, but also an original strategist and tactician, military theorist and ideologist of the Bulgarian national liberation movement.

Georgi Rakovski's contribution was illustrated in an excellent way in 1937 by one of the activists of the Macedonian-Edirne movement, which is a kind of continuation of the struggle for freedom during the Revival. Toma Karayovov is categorical: "Rakovski's contributions are in two directions: 1. He gave the Bulgarians humiliated by Greek propaganda evidence in support of their national pride and assisted in the fight against Greek spiritual slavery. This struggle ended with the creation of an independent Bulgarian church. 2. He turned the personal struggle of the resistance units against the Turkish atrocities into an organized revolutionary activity with a nationwide political goal – the liberation from Turkish rule and the creation of an independent people's state. With the latter, Rakovski was considered the patriarch of the Bulgarian revolutionary thought".



Kosta Karanashev
Mayor of Kotel Municipality

The celebration of the 200th anniversary since the birth of the patriarch of the Bulgarian national revolutionary movement Georgi Stoykov Rakovski is a date filled with historical national significance and an occasion for constant re-

discovery and rethinking of our national values, their defining essence in the destinies of the nation, their relevance to modernity and their commitment to the future. Dedicating his life to the great work of the Bulgarian national revolution, setting the guidelines for achieving the national ideal, Rakovski rose as a leader of the Bulgarians during his lifetime, and after his death continues to be an inspiring example for many generations of Bulgarians. The 200th anniversary of his birth is an occasion to look back again and draw on his vast spiritual legacy, to seek the projection of his spirit and ideas today.

This anniversary is a source for our exhausted

national self-confidence, as well as an occasion to pay tribute to Rakovski's great national work, inscribed in our Revival history having contributed to the crystallization of Bulgaria's national ideal, including the legacy and aspirations for freedom of all Bulgarians united in one state.

14th April is a day of gratitude when all of us – from the youngest to the oldest, will lay flowers, bow our heads in thankfulness to Georgi Stoykov Rakovski's work, his supporters and associates, we will bow before the Bulgarian heroes, to whom we owe our freedom. Kotel and its citizens remain faithful to the legacy of their great son and strive to be worthy of his name!

An Acknowledged National Leader

Prof. Plamen Mitev

In the course of the Ottoman conquests, most of the representatives of the Bulgarian aristocracy and the high Orthodox clergy were killed or forced to seek refuge in our neighboring countries. Only a small part of our elite survived, but at the cost of religious apostasy or accepting to serve the new Balkan masters. Thus, for several centuries, the Bulgarians were deprived of their political leaders who could possibly unite the Christian population in the struggle to reject the foreign Muslim yoke. It was only in the first half of the 19th century that the necessary preconditions were created for the formation of a small but zealous circle of activists who appeared as organizers and leaders of the brightest and most mass movements during the Bulgarian Revival period. Among the representatives of this new national elite, Georgi Stoykov Rakovski stands out with his ideas, messages and deeds.

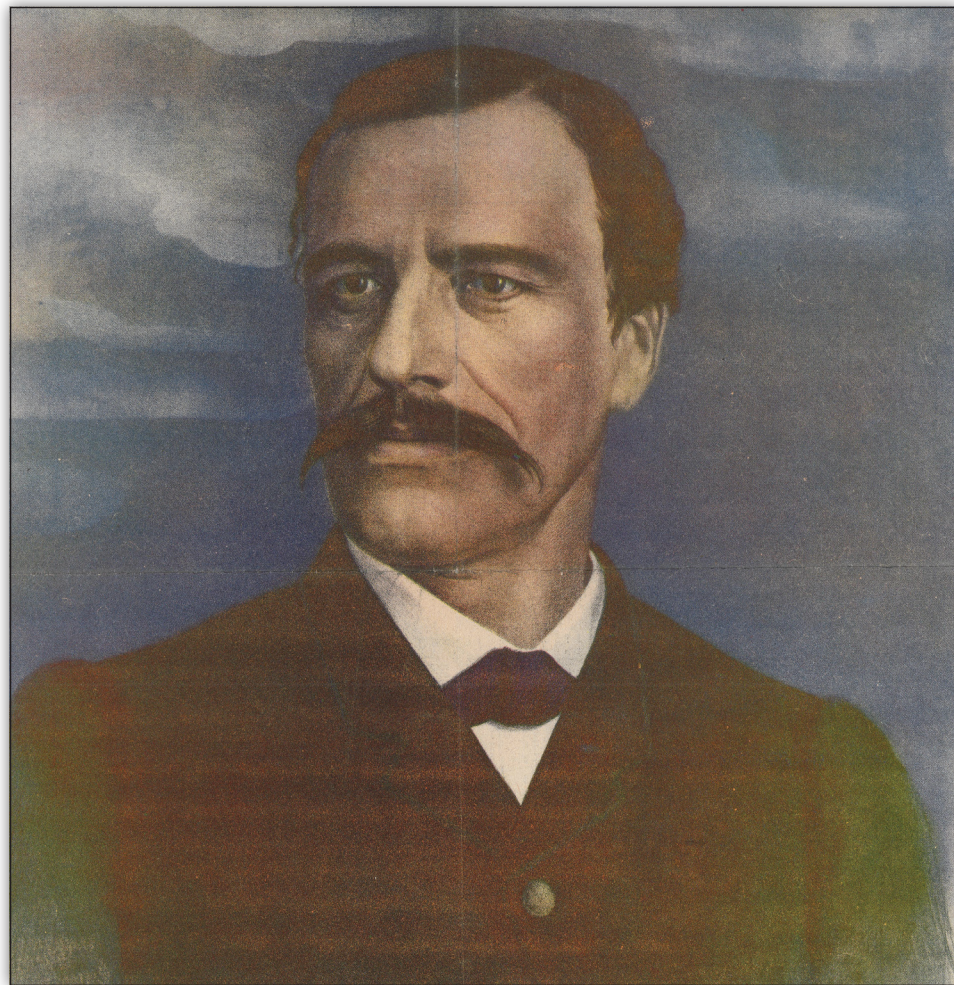
There is a considerable amount of scientific and popular literature about Rakovski's life and deeds, but even today – 200 years after the birth of the hero from Kotel, we continue to wonder what the reason is for the magnetism of his personality. How did Stoyko Sabev and Ruska Mamarcheva's son manage to gain the trust of his compatriots to acknowledge him as their patron and leader? Where did he obtain his incredible energy and zeal? How did he manage to attract his followers and why did European diplomats listen to his voice, read his newspapers, follow his every endeavor?

In search of Georgi Rakovski's charisma, many researchers emphasize his individual qualities – strong will, self-discipline, consistency, determination, fighting spirit, courage, sacrifice. To these must be added the personal charm, the poetic and journalistic talent, which Rakovski undoubtedly possessed and which also helped to establish his authority and influence in the then Bulgarian society. But was the mere mechanical sum of these human virtues sufficient for the author of 'The Forest Traveler' to stand out among his contemporaries?

I do not approve of today's popular rankings of our national heroes by their greatness. But if we have to explain why some of them remain permanently in our historical memory, and others – be it faster, be it slower, sink into oblivion, the determining factor in my opinion is not only their real merits, but also the example they set to today's and tomorrow's generations of Bulgarians on the way they themselves built the qualities of national revolutionaries, church or political leaders.

It is difficult to place all prominent Revival figures to a common algorithm or to measure them with the same yardstick. And in the case of Rakovski, this is more than obvious, because for his growth as one of the first and most revered leaders of our ancestors from the 'long' and dramatic 19th century, there are three factors that play a very important role.

1. Georgi Rakovski's life was largely determined by the material condi-



tions and opportunities provided to the people in his birthplace Kotel – a small and almost unknown village in Stara Planina until the middle of the 18th century, which in just a few decades grew significantly and experienced a stormy boom expressed in the rapid prosperity of local merchants, craftspeople and entrepreneurs. It is no coincidence that the impressive economic prosperity of Kotel in the 18th and early 19th centuries gave grounds for specialists from various historiographical schools to define Kotel's development during the Early Revival as a kind of phenomenon. The signs of economic growth and spiritual awakening can be felt in the renewed architectural appearance of the village, in the increased role of municipal self-government, in the establishment of a local literary school and well-functioning Cell and Hellenic-Bulgarian schools. Here lived and worked some of the first national educators such as priests Milko Kotlenski and Sofroniy Vrachanski, here were born a galaxy of figures such as Peter Beron,

Atanas and Stefan Bogoridi, Capt. Vasil Valkov, Neofit Bozveli, Ivan Kishelski, Anastas Granitski, Stefan Izvorski, Vasil H. Stoyanov-Beron – all bright representatives of our Revival intellectuals and elite, who in the second and third quarters of the 19th century appeared as recognized leaders of the educational, ecclesiastical and liberation cause.

2. The second factor that significantly contributed to the formation of Rakovski as a person was his

the multifaceted and divided Bulgarian emigration.

3. The third important prerequisite for the formation of Georgi Rakovski as a national leader was his education. Rakovski went to school in his native Kotel, but continued his studies in Karlovo with one of the most authoritative Revival teachers Rayno Popovich. At the end of 1837 he left for Constantinople, where he enrolled in the most renowned at that time Greek secular school in the Ottoman Empire – the Great Folk School in Kuruchesme. Here Rakovski had the opportunity, along with Geography, History and Astronomy to study Philosophy, Rhetoric, Theology, Greek, Latin. He later learned Persian and Arabic, using seven languages to varying degrees, according to the testimonies of his close associates. Energetic and ambitious, in only about ten years he managed to gain extensive knowledge in various fields, which was an important prerequisite for his formation as a scholar among the then Bulgarian intellectuals. It was this solid common culture that gave Rakovsky the confidence to study native history on his own, to deal with problems of linguistics and folklore, to competently comment on the geopolitical interests of major European countries, to participate in the subtle diplomatic games of neighboring rulers, to feel equal to the European politicians and diplomats he met in order to discuss the future of Bulgaria and the Balkans.

Georgi Rakovski's merits for the political emancipation of the Bulgarians are exceptional. He was the first among our Revival leaders to be aware of the connection of the Bulgarian political question with the great Eastern question and with his particular activity he did a lot for the organization of various pan-Balkan initiatives against the High Gate. As an ideologist and leader of the Bulgarian emigration, Rakovski managed not only to outline the tactics and strategy of the liberation movement, but also to prepare a new generation of activists who would continue the work he started and show the world that Bulgarians were worthy of their freedom.

Georgi Rakovski also contributed in the field of education. A talented writer and publicist, an avid historian and ethnographer, he skillfully combined the qualities of a revolutionary and an educator, a writer and a scientist, and he owed all this largely to his native Kotel, his family and the school. With this, he and his work today and tomorrow will always set an example to the Bulgarians.

The Town of Kotel in Rakovski's Work

Vera Taskova, Museum of History – Kotel

Rakovski's literary work has its deep roots in the socio-political conditions of time, in folk art, in the creative setting of his personality and last but not least - in his homeland as a summary of all the factors conducive to this process. Kotel is present in his work in three main aspects - as nature, as a village with a rich past and a contribution to the work of its great children.

Growing up in the wonderful nature of the Balkan Mountain in Kotel with the legends of haidouk feats, with the unusual atmosphere of mystery and majestic landscape, Rakovski absorbed deep and later gave life to all this in his works. It comes to life most fully in the poem "Forest Traveler", in the poem "Memory of Fields" and in the description of the city in "Notes of the Forest Traveler". To Rakovski, the Balkans are a source of romance, beauty and pride, of freedom-loving impulses that make his heart exclaim: *"There! I have to go there soon, / fate of the fatherland calls me, / reside in forests and mountains I shall, / our freedom there will be based!"*

Rakovski's belief that Bulgarian freedom will rise in the Balkans is unshakable. For him, the nature of the haidouk Balkan is not just a

ment with a rich social life – Kotel is present in poetic works, in "Story and descriptions of the old Kotel", in "The Vita", "Innocent Bulgarian", "Index" and so on. In "Praise of the Village of Kotel" the birthplace is still present only with the beauty of nature and its glorious past: *"cool high mountains / tall fortresses where alert sentries guarded/ and sent signals to Preslav"*, while in "Memory of Fields" the author ascends to greater poetic heights, spiritualizes the native place, brightens the palette of feelings, liberates the verse and thus reaches more influential sug-

but all this is part of a holistic and profound plan and aims to serve a higher social ideal.

But if he idealizes the nature and the past of the homeland, then he has a very sober and realistic view of the modern processes taking place in the social and economic life of the village, on the clash of interests and characters. This comes to life most vividly in "The Innocent Bulgarian". Here his tone is bilious, but then angry-sarcastic, deeply confessional and sincere, his speech abounds in metaphors, epithets and comparisons. This epic narrative of his becomes a



gestions and poetic summaries.

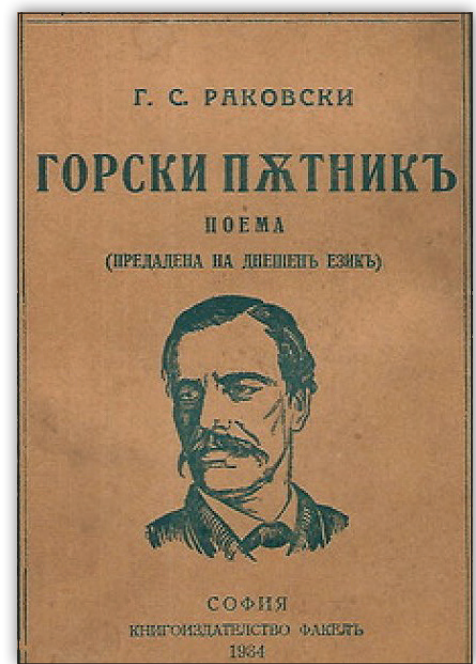
His indisputable creative talent is especially evident in his memoirs, where his native Kotel is the skeleton of the narrative. Rakovski admires and adores what the people of Kotel have done in the history of the motherland: *"They will say that the old Kotel, a great town, was built on this site."*

The key to understanding its greatness is the way of life of Kotel people, their morality and their spiritual world. And Rakovski boldly embarked on new research areas. In all his ethnographic, etymological and linguistic studies he devoted a worthy place to Kotel. Already in "Notes of the first part of the Forest Traveler" he described many Kotel customs, and in "Index" he deepened this line. This comes as no surprise given that it was in Kotel at the end of 1854 that his interest in folk art was awakened. His extreme patriotism led him to conclusions such as: *"Our Kotel, after the fall of the Bulgarian kingdom, gave the first signs of enlightenment."* He idealizes Kotel's past, exaggerates a bit its role, ascribes to the town great predestinations in the destinies of our people,

document of great historical-cognitive and social-educational significance. It is a very serious attempt to portray all aspects of slavery, with great insight, psychological depth and ideological and emotional power. At the same time, along with the general suggestions, a detailed, deep and accurate picture of the town from those days is given: *"Kotel for the glory and honor of Bulgaria to give birth to good and famous Bulgarian citizens, as it once was."*

Rakovski gives valuable information about the economic life, about the guilds, the organization of work, the aspirations for material security, knowledge, Bulgarian church service. The description is an in-depth study, and vivid journalism, and a source of patriotism, and just good literature. It is as beautiful as the beautiful Kotel – this Kotel, which Rakovski is so proud of and the work of whose sons he glorifies as they glorify the Bulgarian spirit.

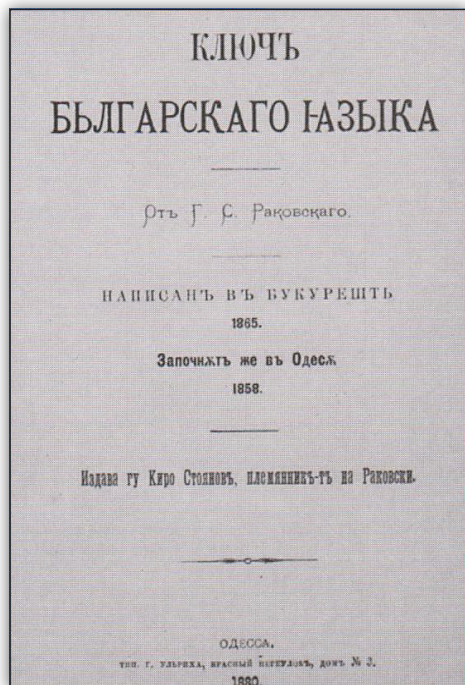
It is the contribution of these great Kotel people that is the third aspect in which the birthplace is revealed in Rakovski's work. Among them in the first place is the father



Stojko Popovic, whom Rakovski admires: *"My father had an iron will and fiery patriotism."* In "The Vita", he proudly points to his uncle Dacho's contribution to the defeat of Inje.

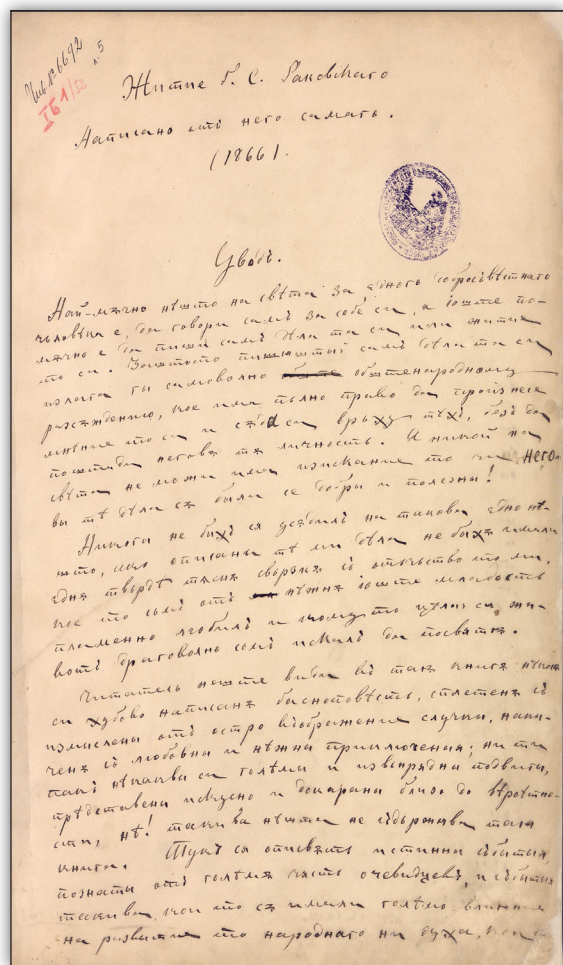
However, he was most strongly influenced by his uncle - the famous captain Georgi Mamarchev. In "Notes of the Forest Traveler" he devotes a dozen pages to him and the events of 1829 – 1830. The narrative is not just a record, it is a passionate defense of the Bulgarian cause and praise for a great Bulgarian. Archimandrite Neofit Bozveli also had an exceptional influence on Rakovski, pushing him with his fiery sermons to take the thorny path of sacrifice for the Fatherland. Rakovski writes about the colossus of the Bulgarian church struggles in his article "Many of the Bulgarians..." and especially in "Bulgarians on the Aroused Question of their Independent Clergy Today". He speaks with superlatives about Neofit and feels indebted to his teacher. He also treats with pride and admiration Dr. Petar Beron, the writers Kipilovski, Granitski, Izvorski, the haidouks raised in Kotel, and concludes: *"Be worthy not to fall lower than our ancestors, but to show today that the same feeling is alive in Kotel"*.

Rakovski's life and work are the brightest proof of the well-preserved and continued glorious name of the native place, of the ability of countless virtues to gather in one person, of the aspirations of an entire nation, of the inexhaustible energy to awaken and move those virtues. That is why Rakovski is a symbol of an entire epoch, that is why he completely merges with the glorious Kotel and with his suffering but reviving Motherland.



background of action, it is an independent image with important ideological and artistic-aesthetic functions. For the first time, a purely contemplative attitude towards it has been noticed – a phenomenon unknown in the literature of that time. Thus, the Balkans grew in Rakovski's work as a collective image of the Bulgarian national spirit, as a vision that foretold prophecies and highlighted the historical meaning of Bulgarian destinies.

In its second aspect – as a settle-



**“G. Rakovski’s Vita written
by Rakovski himself”**

Sabi Stoykov, born in Kotel in 1821 in the family of the wealthy merchant Stoyko Popovich and Ruska Mamarcheva, had a turbulent life. He was named after his grandfather, but remained in history as Georgi Rakovski. We see him involved in various activities of the socio-political life of the Bulgarians in the second and part of the third quarter of the XIX century. He appears as a publicist, writer, ethnographer, lawyer, merchant, translator. He is among the ideologists and founders of the organized revolutionary movement of the Bulgarians.

The documents that have reached us, most of which stored in the Bulgarian Historical Archive at the National Library “St. St. Cyril and Methodius”, shed light on the life and work of the great Bulgarian, as well as the political, cultural and economic processes in our country in the XIX century. These processes were published in 1880 by Kiro Stoyanov, G. Rakovski’s nephew, in the preface to the book “The Key of the Bulgarian Language”. It becomes clear from the book that G. Rakovski entrusted his documentary inheritance to his sister Nesha, and she handed it over for safekeeping to Nikola Balkanski – his cousin. After disputes among the heirs over the ownership of the archive, as well as its purchase by the state, this valuable array of documents was handed over to the Ethnographic Museum, and in 1924 – to the Archives Department of the National Library in Sofia.

**We heard your yells so full of pride,
when at the Sava and the
Dâmbovița
you were the first to yell “Freedom!
Bright is Venus!”
Both with a biting quill and ardent
speech,
the hopes you sow within or out of
human reach.**

Good education, combined with political experience, active journalistic and revolutionary work, established G. Rakovski as a leader among the activists of the national liberation movement.

With a Quill and a Sword

In the complex international situation on the Balkan Peninsula, he tried to orientate the Bulgarians and encourage his revolutionary allies. Through the poem “Forest Traveler” he sparked patriotic feelings, resurrected the memory of haidouk voivodes, and from the pages of the newspaper the “Danube Swan” he ardently criticized the Sultan’s rule. Over the years, the idea of how the Bulgarians should reject foreign oppression gradually crystallized.

The decisive course taken in preparation for an uprising in Bulgaria is expressed in the words “better death than such a life”. In the period of his most active revolutionary activity in the eyes of young Bulgarians he was the Bulgarian Garibaldi. Stoyan Buynov expresses the opinion of the “loyal friends” in Constantinople: *“There are many Bulgarians, brave and consistent, but who’s to be the Bulgarian Garibaldi? Everyone says: hope lies with our Rakovski”*

“Rakovski lived up to the expectations with his actions. Towards the middle of 1861 from Belgrade he began to prepare an uprising in Bulgaria. He tried to find funds and weapons, and in the spring of 1862 the Bulgarian emigrants in Belgrade formed a military formation known as the First Bulgarian Legion. In June 1862, the legionnaires took part in the battles with the Turkish garrison near Belgrade. In the autumn of the same year, Serbia and the Ottoman Empire settled the dispute, and a protocol was signed, according to which foreign volunteer formations were disbanded.

In 1863, in Athens and Cetina, Rakovski negotiated as Serbia’s envoy for the accession of Greece and Montenegro to joint action against Turkey. Disappointed with the hypocritical policies of Bulgaria’s neighbors, in September 1863 Rakovski settled in Bucharest, where he published the newspapers “Budunost” (Future) and “Branitel” (Defender), in which he promoted the ideas of joint action of the Balkan peoples against the Ottoman Empire.

Towards the end of his life, he was convinced that freedom could be achieved without the support of other countries. He established the Supreme People’s Bulgarian Secret Civil Command (1866), governed by the Provisional Law on the People’s Forest resistance for the summer of 1867.

G. Rakovski died on 9th October, 1867 exhausted by tuberculosis. Vazov wrote of him as “a dreamer to the fullest, an image impossible, a son of dark times, but vigorous and worried...”

200 years after the birth of Georgi Rakovski, his work has not been forgotten. Hundreds of studies and artistic portraits are dedicated to his personality. As a sign of respect, his remains have been laid in a pantheon in his hometown, several settlements bear his name, in many settlements there are monuments, bas-reliefs, memorial plaques. He walked his life thinking

The love to fatherland overwhelms all world virtues”, He is an example to all generations of Bulgarians.

**Ruslan Ivanov PhD, Bulgarian Historical
Archive Department, National Library
“St. St. Cyril and Methodius”**

The collection “Fine Arts” of the National Museum of Military History a painting is kept registered under the name of Georgi S. Rakovski. It was bought by the citizen of Sofia Elena M. Todorova in 1942.

The painting is 67 x 90 cm. In its center is a full-length figure of Rakovski with a weapon. He is dressed in national clothes, which can be conditionally considered rebellious. His figure is slightly turned to the right, firmly standing on a flat ground. His combed hair and shaved face with a long mustache hanging at the ends reveal his high forehead. His look is sharp and the chin is strong-willed. The portrait resemblance known from the photos radiates inner determination.

Rakovski is wearing an open outer woollen garment – an anther with long and wide sleeves, with the natural light color of the fabric. You can see the collar of a white shirt and a vest, woven with light,



perhaps tinsel strings. The upper left end of the vest has a decoration resembling the contours of a lion image. Rakovski is girded with a wide woollen belt, above which stand holsters for carrying weapons and equipment. A pistol with a long barrel is inserted in the right side of the belt, and a sword with a scabbard is attached to the left side with a belt. Rakovski is in wide, dark reddish poturi (full-bottomed breeches). The legs are in white leggings and black cords wound on them. At the bottom left, a trench can be seen, along which stand a group of men in rebel clothing and rifles facing Rakovski. They have their backs to the berm and the embankment of the trench. The trench was destroyed to the ground and that is why the figure of Rakovski clearly stands out. Above the embankment is a bust of a kneeling, bearded man armed with a rifle and a scythe. He rests his right hand on the trench. In his left hand, he holds an upright tricolour (red, white, green) with a flag whose edges are drooping. At the upper end there is a leaf-shaped peak with a ring at the lower end.

The trench with the people in it, the flag and the flag bearer definitely suggest that in this particular case there is no ordinary portrait of Rakovski. Rather, his figure is a part, a focus, a center of a multi-figure composition that should be associated with a particular historical event. Given the development of the national liberation movement in the early 1860s, the plot of the painting can only be linked to the fighting of the First Bulgarian Legion in Belgrade in 1862 and Rakovski’s participation in it. Then, in early June (5/17) and in the following days, under Rakovski’s leadership, the Bulgarian legionnaires fought with the Turkish soldiers from the Belgrade garrison from a trench around Serbian Kruna. There is enough information about this in the participants’ memories.

The activity of the Legion is also related to the presence of its battle symbol – a tricolour flag. In the memoirs of one participant the flag was mentioned, but with a different order of the colours: green, white, red. Dimitar Nikolov Zaaraliyata from the village of Karaburun, Stara Zagora region, was chosen as the flag bearer.

The resemblance between Georgi Stoykov’s famous portrait and his image from the painting by Italian artist Andrea Sako “Rakovski with a group of revolutionaries in the Balkans – 1854” also suggests

on the Way to Immortality

that the two paintings are the work of the same author. In both paintings, Rakovski's legs below the knees are painted equally unconvincingly – thin and weak. This gives the impression that Rakovski is wearing white thin trousers, and not the usual woollen ones with a rolled-up top. This nuance speaks of unity in the style of the artist. Biographical information about the artist is scarce.

It is known that in the 1860s Sako was an arts teacher in Bucharest and in the Belgrade Boys' High-school. The first painting I mentioned reproduces an episode of Rakovski's life related to the Crimean War (1853–1856). In the summer of 1854 he tried to join with his company the units of the Russian Danube Army that had moved to Northern Dobrudja. In all probability, the episode was recreated by the artist based on Rakovski's own story.

The same probably refers to the second chronological picture with a plot from the activities of the First Bulgarian Legion in Belgrade in 1862. Perhaps both paintings were created in a short time: from September 1862 – the disbandment of the First Bulgarian Legion in Belgrade – until 21st October, 1867 – Rakovski's death.

The paintings were probably painted in the second half of 1866 or in the first half of 1867. At that time, Rakovski settled in Bucharest in the "Tsiganka" Estate, owned by his cousin Nikola Balkanski. Here in the summer of 1867 he was visited by Ivan Tsankov, a native of Zheravna, a participant in the Tulcea detachment "Golden Hope". Ivan Tsankov was returned by the chief leader Panayot Hitov to Romania to deliver an encrypted letter about the actions of the core of revolutionary activists who had passed through Bulgaria and about the situation in the country.

Our historical literature related to the time of the Bulgarian Revival does not consider the questions of the conditions under which our revolutionaries lived and worked.

It should be noted that Georgi Rakovski had good working conditions in the "Tsiganka" Estate, although his health was constantly



deteriorating. There is no doubt that both paintings used to hang on the walls in his rooms.

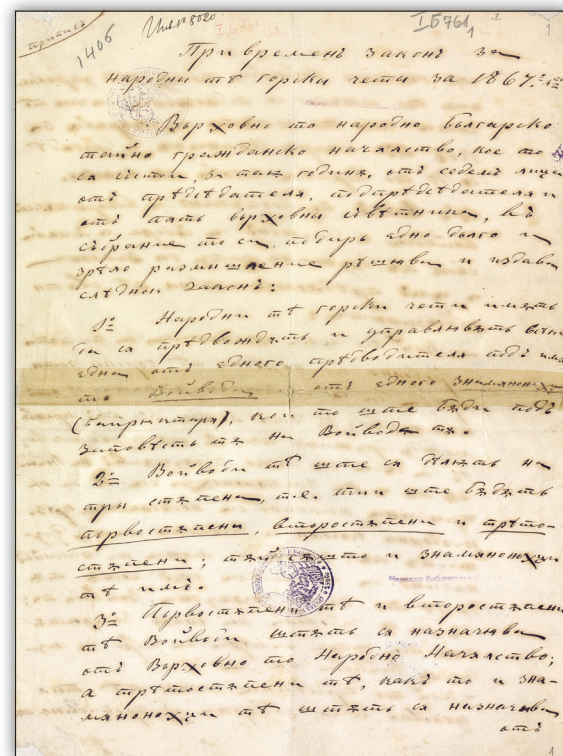
The events related to the First Bulgarian Legion in Belgrade left a lasting and indelible mark on Rakovski's soul, who was at the peak of his practical activity in the fight against the national enslaver. The great revolutionary was on the verge of realizing the dream of his life – to lead an armed volunteer formation that would go deep into the homeland to liberate it. It is no coincidence that Rakovski himself praised the First Bulgarian Legion: *"The year 1862 must remain remarkable for the Bulgarians and be counted as the first step in their politically independent life"*.

This painting is also a visible material expression of this attitude. It expands our ideas about Rakovski and can successfully be presented at thematic or anniversary exhibitions dedicated to the Legion and the National Liberation struggles.

The establishment of the First Bulgarian Legion in Belgrade in 1862 is one of Georgi Rakovski's brightest achievements in his remarkable path as a revolutionary leader, politician and intellectual. The significance of the Legion for the development of the Bulgarian national liberation movement has been emphasized many times because it is a real socio-political phenomenon, a new phenomenon in comparison with the Bulgarian Land Army (1811–1812), with the Bulgarian detachments in Gen. Dibich's army (1828–1829) and the Crimean War (1854–1856). Rakovski's Legion is the school where Stefan Karadzhata, Matei Preobrazhenski, Hristo Ivanov the Great, Ivan Karshovski, Hristo Makedonski, Dimitar Popgeorgiev Berovski and dozens of other fighters grew as revolutionaries for Bulgarian freedom. And in the front line was the future Apostle of Freedom Vasil Levski – the brightest student and successor of Rakovski's work.

In his "Belgrade Plan for the Liberation of Bulgaria" Rakovski envisaged the creation of a military formation of about a thousand armed Bulgarians, incl. cavalry, two mountain cannons, two surgeons, etc. The "regiment" built in Serbia (the name "legion" was introduced in the summer of 1862) was supposed to become the basis of a real army. The task was as it was entering Bulgaria, this well-equipped and trained military force to raise an uprising of the Bulgarians on both sides of the Balkan Mountains, then to reach the old capital Tarnovo and announce the resurrection of the free Bulgarian state.

As early as the autumn of 1861, Rakovski began a real campaign to recruit volunteers and funds, coming into contact with the Bulgarians in Braila, Bucharest, Vienna, Odessa, hundreds of volunteers from Moesia, Thrace and Macedonia, from Bessarabia, from emigrants to Romania and Serbia. The adopted "model" of military formation was predetermined by the conditions themselves – the composition of the future "regiment" included the so-called Avant-garde under the direct command of Captain Rakovski and the detachments of the voivodes Ilio Markov, Ivan Kulin, Stoyan the Macedonian, Tashko Petrov, Tseko Petkov... Some estimates show that in the spring and summer of 1862 Rakovski could rely on a potential of about 1200 – 1500 fighters. Along with the example of Giuseppe Garibaldi's "Thousand" and the uprising in Sicily in 1860, before Rakovski's eyes was the "People's Army" gathering in Serbia – the militia force established in 1861 to compensate for the limited number of the Principality's army considering its vassal position to the Ottoman Empire. With its entry into the enslaved Bulgarian lands, the Legion had to trigger mass mobilization, and armed forces were built in places. With the establishment of the Internal Revolutionary Organization in Bulgaria itself, this model of building the armed forces was continued and further developed by Vasil Levski and his associates. The Legion was a prototype not only of the Armed forces, but of the Liberated Bulgarian State. The most important institution was the "Supreme Command" established by Rakovski – a kind of military headquarters, but also the "Provisional Government", which included some of the authoritative participants in the Legion. The representative elements of the



"Provisional Law on the People's Forest resistance for the summer of 1867". The plan developed by Georgi S. Rakovski defines the objectives, tasks, the organizational structure and the management of the Bulgarian resistance units. Bucharest, 1st January 1867

state were also a fact – a flag, a seal, uniforms, other symbols and practices. Head of State "in exile" was Rakovski himself, perceived by foreigners and his own compatriots as a potential "knyaz" of free Bulgaria.

We know of the disputes that arose due to the representation expenses incurred by the "people's leader", seen by some of his associates as excessive luxury and an expression of vanity ... Rakovski moved about in Belgrade and an honorable escort of "guardians" dressed in an old-Bulgarian uniform <...> with "a white cap on his forehead and a golden-maned lion", in a "red cloth uniform". When in June 1862 leading his men he joined the battles in Belgrade, Rakovski was "on horseback, with a sword in hand, dressed in an old Bulgarian royal robe". These "attributes" irritated the representatives of the intellectuals, especially Ivan Kasabov – his assistant.

In this case, however, it was Rakovski who was right, aware of the meaning of the Legion better than anyone. As its leader, he was not a commander of volunteers or mercenaries, but a political figure who embodied the construction of the Bulgarian army and state.

On 7th (19th) September, 1862, the Serbian authorities disbanded the First Bulgarian Legion. Rakovski did not lose presence of mind – on the contrary, his iron will and innate sense of history gave him the strength to act as a true statesman. He said goodbye to his soldiers, thanking them for their brave and selfless service, encouraging the young disappointed with the failure patriots, that the time would soon come for a new summoning under the flags. Rakovski praised the Legion, highlighting the most important result – the civilized world learned and understood that the Bulgarians were not "a bunch" of obedient farmers, craftsmen and merchants, but a European people who consciously sought to raise their country from the deadly century-old sleep.

With the creation of the First Bulgarian Legion, Rakovski demonstrated his qualities as a national leader, a statesman in perspective. And rightly so, 2021 is the "Year of Rakovski", destined to return the famous son of Bulgaria to his rightful place in our national pantheon! We owe it to Rakovski, but also to ourselves...

Prof. Plamen Pavlov

Georgi Rakovski's Weapon

Reni Roshkeva, a curator at the Regional Museum of History – Russe



In contemporary museums, weapons materialize the heroic deeds and make them visible to the museum visitors. The personal weapon of our national revolutionaries is accepted as an indicator and proof of their heroism and sacrifice and is an inseparable part of the display of historical facts.

The Regional Museum of History in Russe has an important relic of our past: a sword encrusted with the inscription “Sava S. Rakovski, 1st May 1854 (with remains of gold). Despite the lack of written documents, the way the sword was discovered links it to a great extent to the name of Georgi Rakovski. It was found rusty when tearing down a fence in 1955. After the rust was cleared, the inscription became visible, which made the owner hand it in to the museum in Dve Mogili, Russe region.

The sword

of Gyoko Yordanov, known in the family to have been a revolutionary, is unprovable at this stage, but can be connected with another existing story about Rakovski's sword – that of Ivan N. Ivanov, director of the Regional Museum of History – Russe, from 1972 to 1982. In his book “Silhouettes in time. Historical Essays on Russe and the Russe Region” he wrote that in December 1978, as director of the museum, he received a letter from Koyu Kirov Savov from the village of Semerdzhievo, Russe region, in which a recording of Rada Yordanova Kalmukova's story from the same village was attached. Rada knew from her mother that her grandfather Dimo Ingioza (who lived in the village of Novo Selo) was in Rakovski's legion in Belgrade. When the latter

Turkish army headquarters to support Russian troops. He headed the Secret Society he and his friends had set up and visited several Bulgarian cities in order to organize surveillance groups to gather information. From Nikola Obretenov's memoirs (published in 1970) we understand that this was also the time when he visited the family of grandmother Tonka.

In 1854, Rakovski was disclosed, arrested and sent in a convoy to Constantinople, but managed to escape on the way. For some time he struggled with a group of 12 people in the Kotel Balkan Mountain, after which he left for Novi Sad. It is difficult to come up with an unambiguous answer to the question of when and how to parted with this sword. In 1964 The National Museum of history in Sofia made a copy of it, which was part of its exhibition until

(along with the bottle with Peter Beron's heart) in the museum “Kotel Revival leaders with Rakovski's Pantheon”. There is no information where the original is. Upon inquiry, it was established that it was again a copy of the ‘Russe’ sword. In the absence of information about the sword, the fact that the weapon is on display in the revolutionary's hometown leaves the impression that it is original.

In the collections of the National Museum of Military History (NMMH) a capsule carbine is kept with a knife, inv. № I-I-202. The carbine was handed over by the Ethnographic Museum in 1942 with an indication that it belonged to Rakovski. The monogram “G. R.” in manuscript, year 1867 and “Romania”. The carbine is capsule, military, Romanian. The caliber is 18

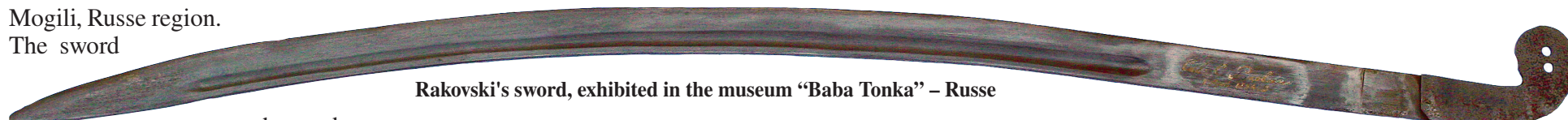


A flintlock pistol kept in the Historical Museum in Svishtov

1887, by the words of N. Domuschiev.

It is important to note that there is a second copy of the sword in Kotel. It is presented as an “exact copy of the original sword”, owned by the inspirer of the Bulgarian legions Rakovski. It

mm. The knife has a sheath, length 70 cm, length of wedge 58 cm. It is known that for the needs of Rakovski's Pantheon located in his hometown Kotel, the master of weapons from Pernik – Yotsko G. Yotsov, made an



Rakovski's sword, exhibited in the museum “Baba Tonka” – Russe

has been kept in the Russe museum since 1967 without any mentioning that it had been part of another museum display. It was given the number №682H, Basic collection, History of Bulgaria XV – XIX Centuries Department. It was a gold inscription in two lines: “Sava S. Rakovski / 1st May 1854”. The handle is missing, the sword's length is 96,5 cm, and the length of the wedge is 83 cm. The inventory book of the department reads that it was brought in by Gyoko Yordanov.

The thesis of Rakovski's connection (although not direct) with a relative

“felt seriously ill, he decided to seek treatment in Romania and, passing through Novo Selo, left the sword and rifle in the custody of Dimo Ingiosa.” The answer to the question why this memory was recorded in 1978, leads us to the celebrations of the 100th anniversary of the Liberation of Bulgaria.

For connoisseurs of Rakovski's biography it is no secret his birth name - Sabi (or Sava in its Greek version). The date of the sword's blade directs researchers to the time when, after the outbreak of the Crimean War, Rakovski worked as a translator at the

is placed on the sarcophagus of the revolutionary in the Pantheon in his hometown. The description there reads: G. St. Rakovski's sword – a spear, a strongly curved blade with a wedge, its base reads “Sava S. Rakovski 1st May, 1854”. A handle made of a bone, brass stopper with two balls down, and the middle points downwards. Width of the blade at the base 3 cm, length of the blade 88.5 cm, length of the sword 100.5 cm” (inv. №785, main collection, according to information by Ivan Ivanov).

In tourist guides, the sword is mentioned as one of the valuables

exact copy of the capsule carbine”, according to N. Domuschiev (1996).

He tells about the history of Rakovski's flintlock pistols, dated 1864, in the Bulletin of NMMH, item XI. When Rakovski's bones were transported from Bucharest to Bulgaria in 1885, his flintlock “pairs of pistols” were brought to the capital together with the coffin. Until 1908 they were stored in the National Library, and then until 1929 they were part of the collection of the National Ethnographic Museum. At the opening of the House Museum “Aleko Konstantinov” in Svishtov – a branch of the National Ethnographic Museum in Sofia, with the mediation of Evdokia Peteva, Rakovski's weapon was transferred to the city along the Danube river.

The historical reference for the pistols, recorded in the Historical Museum – Svishtov, in the inventory book “Vazrazhdane” under №86 and №87, reads: “they were bequeathed



A capsule carbine with encrusted Rakovski's initials. Exhibited in the National Military History Museum – Sofia



A flintlock pistol kept in the National Military History Museum – Sofia

in 1931 by Dr. Tsvetan Radoslavov (author of “Mila Rodino”) from Svishtov and entered the museum in 1933. Much later, by decision of the chairman of the Committee for Culture, the two pistols were separated: one remained in Svishtov, and the other was transferred to the National Museum of History in Sofia”) in 1983, according to Nadia Angelova from the History Museum in Svishtov.

It is believed that during his last visit to the city on the way to Wallachia in 1855, Rakovski left the flintlock pistols with his friend Gavril Hadjidenkov, one of the leaders of the “Secret Society” in Svishtov: “On arrival in Svishtov, Rakovski left his horse to the inn, and the pistols to Gavril H. Denkov. In 1885, when the bones of the revolutionary were transferred on 2nd June to Sofia via Svishtov, H. Denkov’s nephew, the teacher in Sofia Tsv. Radoslavov handed them over to our State Museum in Sofia”, wrote in 1929 Archpriest Stefan Ganchev. This circumstance sheds some light on why one of the pistols from the Ethnographic Museum was returned to Svishtov (according to the story by N. Domuschiev). According to research by Julia Nikolova from 2008, Rakovski left the pistols with Tsvyatko Radoslavov, Tsvetan Radoslavov’s grandfather and adoptive father. There are still unspecified facts about the weapon of the ideologist of the Bulgarian revolution. As it is known, capsule pistols with an annotation that they belong to Rakovski are exhibited in the permanent exposition of the NMMH.

Weapons as material history help to glorify the heroes of the Bulgarian national revolutionary saga. The adoration for the deeds of our freedom fighters is illustrated by the public worship of the weapons they use. Although in most cases, the origin of the weapons is unclear, our collective memory, the “present of the past” as defined by Marie-Claire Lavabr , connects them with the most famous Bulgarian revolutionaries. Whether they are authentic or not, weapons, like myths, are an important resource for building the heroism of national consolidation processes and for creating and sustaining “great historical narratives” Modern Bulgarians need such narratives and Georgi Rakovski’s personality is a stronghold for our national spirit even today.

The Press and the Sword

Mihail Simov PhD, a curator in the Revival Department of the National Museum of History

In the preamble to the biography of Georgi Rakovski published a century ago, our famous historian Mihail Arnaudov noted that the more powerful the impetus of the activity of the famous Kotel-born Bulgarian on the Revival processes in Bulgaria, the weaker the memory of him is today.

Today, a century later, this finding still sounds relevant. Of course, Rakovski is given a prominent place in the pantheon of figures of our national revival, his name is present in every school history textbook, but for his almost three-decade tireless work for the benefit of the people, the general public is aware of close to nothing. Let this introduction not sound so much as an accusation of any indifference to the native history, but rather as a proof of the remarkable scope and comprehensiveness

ing the national spirit, accumulating inner energy, bringing up a generation of educated people, patriotic and purposeful Bulgarians to bear on their shoulders the burden of the struggle against the Ottoman oppressor.

True to his beliefs, he uses all possible means to achieve his goals. The whole essence of Rakovski’s comprehensive activity is synthesized in his categorical decision to openly fight the Turkish government “through the press and the sword” a decision to which he remained loyal for the rest of his life.

The National Museum of History celebrates the 200th anniversary of the birth of Georgi Stoykov Rakovski with its exhibition “The Press and the Sword”, realized in cooperation with the Regional History Museum –

diplomat or a strategist of the national revolution, Rakovski invariably emerged as a person led by the same goal – the struggle for freedom and prosperity of the fatherland he “came to love so much as a young man”.

It is namely in this light that the exhibition “The Press and the Sword” presents the founder of the organized revolutionary movement in Bulgaria of the Revival.

Visitors to the National Museum of History can see Rakovski’s personal weapon – a sword and a flintlock pistol, provided respectively by the Regional History Museum – Russe, and the History Museum – Svishtov. The most significant works of the revolutionary are also presented – the poem “Forest Traveler”; his books “A few speeches about Assen the First”; his



of the activity of this ‘giant’ of the Bulgarian Revival.

Rakovski cannot be seen only as a revolutionary, a voivode, a military strategist, a scientist, a writer, a poet, a publicist, a politician or a diplomat: he is all these taken together. It is the unique combination of the qualities of a warrior and educator, uncompromising revolutionary and calculating politician, talented writer and ardent patriot that makes Georgi Rakovski a person who has left such a deep imprint on the minds of contemporaries and given a powerful impetus to the Bulgarian national revival.

With his brilliant education, rare erudition and breadth of his worldview, Rakovski sees cultural development, the pursuit of ecclesiastical independence and political independence as integral parts of a long process of national maturation, rais-

Russe, the History Museum – Kotel, and the National Library “St. St. Cyril and Methodius”. The exhibition aims to present the tireless struggle of the man whose name is associated with an entire era in our national liberation movement led by the power of words and weapons against the oppressors of the Bulgarian people.

Although voices accusing Rakovski of chaotic actions were heard during his lifetime, the reading of his rich documentary heritage and his published works reveals exceptional consistency and purposefulness in the struggle enlisting all means of raising the people’s spirit, creating a mass national revolutionary movement, preparing its leaders and the fight for Bulgarian freedom. Whether as a leader of a resistance unit in the Balkan mountains, a researcher of native history, a poet, a publicist, a

“Index Book”, representing an extensive program for ethnographic study of the Bulgarian lands; the book “The Key of the Bulgarian Language”; the first of its kind for Bulgaria’s magazine “Bulgarian Antiquity”, as well as the newspapers published by Rakovski, among which “Dunavski Leb-ed” (Danube Swan) stands out as a major periodical.

A special focus of the exhibition is the coffin made especially for the transport in 1885 of Rakovski’s bone remains from Bucharest to Sofia. The coffin is part of the collection of the History Museum in Kotel and was provided especially for the exhibition.

The exhibition can be seen at the National Museum of History from April to July 2021.

A Cultural Center of the Reviving Bulgarian People

Georgi Rakovski and the Bulgarian High School of Bolgrad 1858 – 1878

Nikola Karaivanov

After the Crimean War of 1853–1856 and according to the Paris Peace Treaty of 1856, the town of Bolgrad and 39 other Bulgarian villages in Bessarabia moved to the territory of the vassal Turkish principality of Moldova. In March 1857, the sultan appointed Prince Nicolas Bogoridi as head of the state of Moldova.

In January 1858, Georgi Rakovski arrived in the Moldovan capital, Iași, on behalf of the Bulgarians of Galati to petition the prince to allow a Bulgarian printing house to be opened in the town. It is known from Rakovski's biography that he and Nikola Bogoridi were classmates and close friends from their studies at the most elite Greek high school – the Great School in the Korucheshme district of Constantinople. In Prince Bogoridi's reception room Rakovski made his acquaintance with two members of Parliament of the Bessarabian Bulgarians Panayot Grekov and Georgi Minchev, who were about to submit a request by the inhabitants of Bolgrad and 39 Bulgarian villages within Moldova to open a Bulgarian high school in Bolgrad.

Georgi Rakovski quickly made friends with them and appreciated their warm and strong patriotism: *"I really saw in them noble feelings and patriotic thoughts."* He wrote: *"I saw these proxies every day and gave them, whenever possible, my heartfelt Bulgarian instructions."* Georgi Rakovski began vigorously lobbying in front of his school friend Prince Bogoridi to issue a decree on the establishment of a high school in the administrative center of the Bessarabian Bulgarian villages of Bolgrad – the first Bulgarian high school.

In Iași, appreciating Georgi Rakovski's experience, knowledge and authority the representatives of the

Bessarabian Bulgarians Grekov and Minchev offered him to become the principal of the Bulgarian high school. Rakovski wrote about this invitation in March 1858 to Ivan Ivanov: *"They were satisfied with me, they asked me to come to Bolgrad and to cooperate so that this Bulgarian work - the high school - would start functioning. I gladly accepted that."* Days later, he learned that the Turkish authorities were urging Prince Bogoridi that Rakovski be arrested and sent to

Majesty should know that the future of the Bulgarians is much brighter than the future of the Moldovans. Take advantage of the circumstances!" In his letter, Georgi Rakovski pointed out the historical significance and perspective for the educational and cultural prosperity of the Bulgarians and their "much brighter future" compared to that of the Moldovans.

On 10th (22nd) June, 1858, the desired chrysoyul (decree) was issued by the Prince of Moldova Nikola Bogoridi

with the problems of the first Bulgarian high school. This is evident from the letters he wrote to the school board in Bolgrad, to individual members of the Board of Trustees (Panayot Grekov) or to the first principal, and then a high school teacher Sava Radulov. Rakovski advised taking seriously the selection of teachers and recommended that more capable teachers be given the opportunity to go abroad to specialize in order to increase their scien-

aspirations include not only the expectations of a bright future and human-like prosperity in the foreign lands, but the whole of Bulgaria as well can benefit, and your city will become famous and glorious among all the Bulgarian people!

Unspoken really is my jealousy, and I felt spiritual pleasure for this successful first act of yours! I beg you from the heart and in the future, so peacefully, to follow in your holy field, through which you will only successfully reach the desired success! As much as I had the honor to know from your fellow citizens, I tell you without pretense that I saw truly patriotic Bulgarians in whose hearts noble jealousy and noble feeling has risen for the enlightenment of our people. But this jealousy will only be known and appreciated when words are put into action. Rather, to set up this central high school in Bolgrad, that is, to bring in educated Bulgarian teachers, to start working and teaching in the first place. You should know that political circumstances are volatile and can change! You really need a lot of work to get started, but be fearless; just start acting, and it will always pay off.

Perseverance with diligence brings every work to perfection. Work according to the current circumstances and try to lay a good foundation at the beginning. For every work, whatever foundation a man lays at the beginning, such results will he reap in the end; and most of all this is nationwide work. Look to the future with discernment, and imagine your future as if you are not doing temporary work, but eternal work, which the descendants will have to consider in the future, and to evaluate your deeds with dignity. What other immortal benefit does man have in this temporary world, except to deserve a



the Turkish capital to be given the death sentence he had from a Turkish court. It became clear it was impossible for Rakovski to become the principal of the high school in Bolgrad on the territory of the vassal Turkish principality of Moldova. He quickly moved to Russian territory and in March 1858 he settled in Odessa.

From the Black Sea city he sent a letter of gratitude to Prince Nikola Bogoridi: *"And when the proxies of the Bulgarian settlements in Bessarabia appeared and asked for the establishment of a high school in Bolgrad, Your Grace showed such favorable feelings and without delay allowed them to do what they wanted < ... > Your*

for the opening of a Bulgarian high school in the town of Bolgrad. By virtue of this chrysoyul, the Bolgrad High School was accessible to the children of all colonists and foreigners, regardless of their financial status, and the only requirement was that they be of the Orthodox faith. This decree proclaimed that *"all subjects in this school will be taught in Bulgarian with Romanian studied as a foreign language."*

Georgi Rakovski's connection with the public and educational figures of the Bulgarians from Bessarabia was of great importance for the development of the Bolgrad High School in the first years of its existence. Wherever he was, whatever he did, he lived

tific and pedagogical training.

A program statement for the Bolgrad High School can be considered the letter from the beginning of April 1858, which Georgi Rakovski addressed to the Bulgarian leaders Panayot Mumcioglu (Grekov), Docho Hristov, Nikola Parushev, Ivan Danchov and other *"patriotic Bulgarian residents of Bolgrad"*.

The most significant and eloquent paragraphs from the program for the establishment and development of the high school are as follows: *"On my arrival in Odessa, I was informed that you had gathered and, due to mutual consent, you had selected trustees to manage this nationwide cause, whose*



commendable name and an indelible memory in posterity?”

From 18th October, 1860 to 28th September, 1861, Sava Radulov wrote six letters to Rakovski. The main topics in them were the distribution of the “Dunavski Lebed” (Danube Swan) newspaper in Bessarabia and Bolgrad and the repression of the Moldavian army and police against the Bessarabian Bulgarians in November 1860. In a letter to Georgi Rakovski dated 17th January, 1861, Sava Radulov listed the subscribers of the “Dunavski Lebed” newspaper in Bolgrad and under №8 indicates the High School in Bolgrad. “For these subscriptions, you will be charged the money for a six-month prepayment...”. This subscription refers to the library of the Bolgrad High School, where the entire issues of the “Dunavski Lebed” newspaper was located. In one of his letters to Georgi Rakovski, Sava Radulov wrote: “Your words are preached as holy words throughout Bolgrad.”

Although after 1861 Georgi Rakovski was mainly busy organizing the liberation struggle of the Bulgarian people, he continued to be interested in the problems of the Bolgrad High School. From 1858 to 1878 it grew not only as the first Bulgarian secondary school, but became a national educational center and cultural center of the reviving Bulgarian people.

And in the following years until 1866, when Georgi Rakovski passed through

Bessarabia and Bolgrad, in his live communication or correspondence he was interested in the condition, problems and successes of the Bolgrad High School. But the years 1858 – 1861 were the main of his activity in relation to the first Bulgarian high school, because then it began to function as a leading institution of the Bulgarian Revival education.

And quite naturally, after 140 years, at the end of 1998, the teaching staff and the parents of the Bolgrad High School, restored in 1993, decided at a general meeting and proposed that Georgi Rakovski be the patron of the high school. By decree of 5th April, 1999, the Council of Ministers of Ukraine gave the name of Georgi Rakovski to the Bulgarian High School. The flag of the high school with the image of Rakovski was sewn in a studio in Sofia. In April 1999, Georgi Rakovski High School in the town of Kotel presented the Bulgarian High School in Bolgrad with a bronze bust of Rakovski (sculptor Acad. Ivan Lazarov), cast in Vienna in 1936. On 29th May, 1999, the bust-monument of Georgi Rakovski and the flag of the high school were inaugurated and consecrated in front of the school building. Thus, the great merits of the great Bulgarian Georgi Rakovski for the creation and development of the first Bulgarian high school were marked with a patron’s name, a bust-monument and a high school flag with his image.

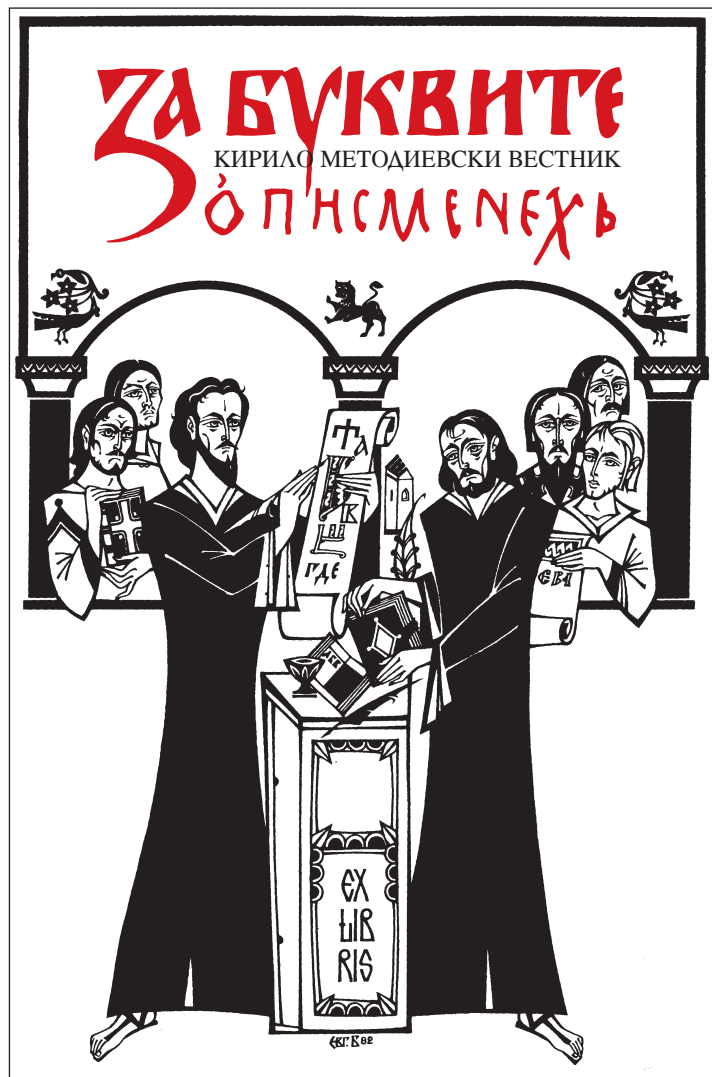
Should be known that
my real name is Georgi
Stoykov Rakovski”

“My love for the
Fatherland exceeds all
world goodness”

“Fatherland and nation
are the two best, sweetest
and most comforting
words for the sensitive
person and he sacrifices
all that is most precious
in the world”

“...for as long as my
legs and hands can hold
and as long as I feel the
slightest clever power
in me, I shall not stop
working for the sake of
my people, who I have
loved so much since
youth and who I hold so
dear as the most precious
and sacred thing in this
world!...”

“Let everyone inscribe
deep in their hearts:
Freedom or Death!”
“Dear youth! Today’s
generation, Bulgaria
awaits that you see
into the glorious future
together, the impostor
prophet to strike! The
flag of Asia should fall
to the lowest, the lion
should rise with a crown,
shout to the world in a
voice so high: Alive is
glorious Bulgaria
once more!!!”



A bookplate, Evgeniy Bosyatski

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“... for as long as my legs and hands can hold and as long as I feel the slightest clever power in me, I shall not stop working for the sake of my people, who I have loved so much since youth and who I hold so dear as the most precious and sacred thing in this world!...”

