

POLITICAL ACTIVITIES OF SOPHRONIUS VRACHANSKI

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ABSTRACT. The beginning of the 19th century was a difficult period for the Bulgarian population, caused by a deep crisis in the Ottoman Empire and another Russo-Turkish war of 1806–1812. During the conflict, the former bishop of Vratsa, Sophronius, together with a circle of activists, undertook political action to support the Russian military effort and help the civilian population fleeing the horrors of the war. This action ultimately ended in failure, as it was not possible to obtain autonomy for the Bulgarians, but the political program they developed was an important stage in the formation of the native national liberation movement. Thanks to his achievements, Sophronius is known in Bulgarian historiography not only as a priest and one of the codifiers of the modern Bulgarian language, but also as a political activist.

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The life and activities of Bishop Sophronius of Vratsa (1739–about 1813, secular name: Stoyko Vladislavov) fell during a turbulent period in the history of the entire European continent. The Napoleonic wars, unrest in the crumbling Ottoman Empire, successive armed conflicts between St. Petersburg and Constantinople¹ and the developing national liberation movements in the Balkans² created conditions in which

¹ See W. Morawski, S. Szawłowska, *Wojny rosyjsko-tureckie od XVII do XX wieku*, Warszawa 2006.

² See M. Dymarski, *Konflikty na Balkanach w okresie kształtowania się państw narodowych w XIX i na początku XX wieku*, Wrocław 2010.



Bulgarians, having been enslaved for more than four centuries, could once again attempt to fight for political independence. In the then existing realities, these efforts ultimately proved fruitless,³ but the activity of individual representatives of the native National Revival,⁴ falling in the years between the writing of “Slavic–Bulgarian History” by the monk Paisius in 1762 and 1878, when the subsequent Russo-Turkish War (1877–1878) resulted in the establishment of an autonomous (though not yet fully independent) Principality of Bulgaria, marked an important stage in the formation of concepts and specific political plans for the next generation of revivalist activists.

Undoubtedly, it was Sophronius of Vratsa who constituted the most prominent figure in the Bulgarian national liberation movement of the early 19th century. He became actively involved in political activity during the Russo-Turkish War, fought between 1806 and 1812. His curriculum vitae is by no means limited to the commitment of this nature; to the Bulgarian public he is known primarily as the author of collections of sermons and moral instructions, as well as autobiographies (“Житие и страдания грешнаго Софрония”), and as one of the codifiers of the modern Bulgarian language.⁵ It is pointed out that although his worldview was still shaped by the ideas of the previous century, Bishop Vrachanski’s work is the most notable manifestation of the transition from one era to another, symbolized by Western Enlightenment philosophy, with its rationalism and optimism, and its treatment of the individual as an independent entity.⁶ Sophronius’s patriotism was formed under the influence of Damascene, on the one hand, and Paisius’s “Slavic-Bulgarian History” on the other, which he personally acquainted with in his native village of Kotel in 1765, and where he made the first known copy of the work of Hilandar monk that same year.⁷ The later bishop of Vratsa was also inspired by the works of Christophor Zepharovich and Partheniy Pavlovich. From the latter he adopted the idea that the liberation of the

³ The Napoleonic wars played a catalytic role in the transformation of consciousness and politics especially in the case of Croats, especially after the creation of the Illyrian Provinces in 1809, which became part of Napoleon’s empire. Both Serbs and Bulgarians remained outside the framework of these activities, nevertheless the wars of the early 19th century also played a role in their case. See L. Bazyłow, *Słowiańszczyzna [in:] Europa i świat w epoce napoleońskiej*, ed. M. Senkowska-Gluck, Warszawa 1989, p. 374–384.

⁴ See Н. Генчев, *Българското възраждане*, София 1988.

⁵ More extensively on the character of Sophronius Vrachanski И. Радев, *Софроний Врачански. Личност и творческото дело*, София 1983; В. Киселков, *Софроний Врачански. Живот и творчество*, София 1963; *Софроний Врачански. Сборник изследвания*, ред. Д. Караджова, С. Таринска, София 2004; К. Ничева, *Езикът на Софрониевия Неделик в историята на българския език*, София 1965; Н. Аретов, *Софроний Врачански. Живот и дело*, София 2017; В. Магарос, *Паисий Хилендарски и Софроний Врачански. От православната идеология към изграждане на българската идентичност*, София 2012.

⁶ С. Дойнов, *Българското национално-освободително движение 1800–1812*, София 1979, p. 40–41.

⁷ М. Ангелов, *История на преписите на „История славянобългарска“ до началото на XIX век [in:] Св. Паисий Хилендарски: между мисията и историята*, eds. А. Делипапазов, С. Чиликов, А. Любенова, Пловдив 2022, p. 25.

Orthodox Slavs in the Balkans – including the Bulgarians – could only be accomplished with the help of Russia.⁸ It is also impossible not to mention Sophronius's interest in the civilization of Antiquity and the philosophy of ancient Greece and Rome, held by him in high esteem not only for their aesthetic or cultural qualities, but above all as a potential source of ideas for the stimulation of the national spirit and the possibility of forming the awareness of the Bulgarians as a separate community among other nations in the Balkans.⁹ There are well-known translations from the Greek by Sophronius. In the context of the present text, we will mention here first of all the translation of the 17th century work “Theatrum politicum” (completed in 1809), which promotes the ideas of Enlightenment absolutism, approved by the Bishop of Vratsa.¹⁰

Sophronius Vrachanski conducted his political activities not on Bulgarian soil, but mainly in exile in Bucharest, where he moved permanently at the beginning of the 19th century, specifically in 1803.¹¹ The reason for leaving his native land was, as for many Bulgarians, the social unrest in the Ottoman Empire at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries.¹² This was reported, among other things, by Russian diplomats in their reports to St. Petersburg, describing the rebellions of separatist troops of pasha of Vidin, Osman Pazvantoglu, attempting to establish an independent state on Bulgarian lands.¹³ There were constant robberies together with entire villages burning, which, of course, involved a constant fear for dwellers' lives and their loved ones among the masses of civilians. The situation was said to be so serious that it even threatened the breakup of the Turkish state itself.¹⁴ Bound periodically by an alliance

⁸ According to Stefan Doynov, it was Partheniy Pavlovich who was the first to openly express the idea of liberating the Balkan nations with the help of Russia and its „belligerence in the name of Christ” („христоблюбивое войнство”). See С. Дойнов, *Българското национално-освободително движение*, p. 36–37.

⁹ И. Радев, *op. cit.*, p. 26–28.

¹⁰ С. Дойнов, *Българското национално-освободително движение*, p. 43.

¹¹ In many places one can find the information that Sophronius's first stay in Romanian lands took place in 1803, although there are testimonies that he had already been there earlier, as early as February of the previous year, and the first document here signed with his name is dated December 1802; N. Dura, *New Discoveries – On the Basis of Original Documentary Materials – on the Life and Activity of Bishop Sofronij Vrachanski (1739–1813) in Vallachia, His Adoptive Country*, “Bulgarian Historical Review” 1991, no. 1, p. 30–31.

¹² В.П. Грачев, *Към въпроса за преселването на българи в Русия в началото на XIX век* [in:] *Българското възраждане и Русия*, eds. Д. Косев et al., София 1981, p. 264–289. More extensively on the migration of the non-Muslim population from Bulgarian lands to the territories of the Danube principalities and to Russia in the second half of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (with special emphasis on the outmigration during the period of the successive Russo-Turkish conflicts) K. Popek, B. Rusin, *Uchodźcy, czyli goście Boga. Studia z dziejów migracji bałkańskich w XIX wieku – przypadek Bułgarii i Serbii*, Kraków 2022, p. 24–70.

¹³ *Рапорт до императора от руския посланик в Цариград Тамара с дата 25 май 1802 г.* [in:] П. Орешков, *Няколко документа за Пазвантоглу и Софроний Врачански (1800–1812)*, no. 6, “Сборник на Българската Академия на Науките”, София 1914, vol. 3, p. 36–37.

¹⁴ В.П. Грачев, *op. cit.*, p. 266. See В. Мутафчиева, *Феодалните размирици в Северна Тракия в края на XVIII и началото на XIX век* [in:] *Паисий Хилендарски и неговата епоха (1762–1962). Сборник от изследвания по случай 200-годишнината от История славянобългарска*, eds. Д. Косев

with the Ottoman Porte, Russia was unable to carry out resettlement activities officially, but the population nevertheless left the threatened areas throughout the period in question. Bulgarians and other groups emigrated in two ways: by sea (mainly from the ports of Constantinople) and by land – crossing the Danube, from where, under the guidance of Russian diplomatic representatives, they were to head for the lands of the Novorossiia governorates. Nevertheless, on the eve of the next Russo-Turkish war, the Bulgarian population headed mainly to Austria and the territories of Romanian Moldavia and Wallachia, on the one hand wishing to maintain contact with their native lands, while on the other hand the emigration was hampered due to strict border controls between the Porte and the Romanov Empire.¹⁵

The situation changed radically in late 1805, when the troops of the anti-French coalition suffered defeat at the Battle of Austerlitz. The Turkish authorities, enticed by French promises to regain their possessions on the western and northern coasts of the Black Sea, declared the war on Russia in December 1806. The Russian army, anticipating this fact, had previously occupied the entire territory of the Danube principalities, except for a few fortified points on the left bank of the Danube, including the fortress at Izmail, which was only conquered in September 1809. In the meantime, there was otherwise no serious military action – after the assassination of Sultan Selim III, the priority for the Turkish authorities was to control the deepening anarchy in the state. On the other hand, the Russian-Turkish truce concluded in Slobozia was in effect from August 1807, and it lasted almost two years – hostilities resumed in March 1809. The strength of the Russian army increased at this time to 80,000 soldiers, and Prince Alexander Prozorovsky became the commander-in-chief who devised a new plan to capture the defending fortresses and then cross the Danube line and enter Bulgarian lands.¹⁶

The activity of Bulgarians during the war of 1806–1812 was expressed in two main dimensions. They joined volunteer units formed by the Russian army, and soon also established their own armed force under the name of the Bulgarian Land Army (Българска земска войска). The population supported the Russian troops by providing corodies, provender and animal fodder, and by providing a great deal of in-

et al, София 1972, p. 167–212; В. Мутафчиева, А. Виану, *Феодалните размирици в Северна България в края на XVIII и началото на XIX. и тяхното отражение във Влахия* [in:] *Българо-румънски връзки и отношения през вековете. Изследвания*, vol. 1, eds Д. Ангелов et al, София 1956, p. 193–252; Щ. Атанасов, *Селските въстания в България към края на XVIII в. и началото на XIX в. и създаването на българската земска войска*, София 1958, p. 5–153.

¹⁵ В.П. Грачев, *op. cit.*, p. 264–289; К. Попек, В. Rusin, *op. cit.*, p. 38–39.

¹⁶ In this text, the author does not go into more detail about the warfare between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, unless it is important to understand the context and the role played by Sophronius Vrachanski and other revivalists in these events. For more on the 1807–1809 campaign, see А. Петров, *Война России с Турцией 1806–1812 гг., т. 1, 1806 и 1807 гг.*, Санкт-Петербург 1885, p. 122–362; А. Петров, *Война России с Турцией 1806–1812 гг., т. 2, 1808 и 1809 гг.*, Санкт-Петербург 1887, p. 1–537; Н. Бабилунга, *Русско-турецкая война 1806–1812 гг. Освобождение Бессарабии от османского ига*, “Русин” 2012, no. 1 (27), p. 62–68.

formation on the status and movements of the Turkish forces. This issue is elaborated on in more detail elsewhere.¹⁷ The second type of activity of the Bulgarians was of a political nature, which will be of our main interest here. Hence, we need to go back a bit to 1804, when a diplomatic mission set out from the lands of north-western Bulgaria to St. Petersburg, which is known in Bulgarian historiography as the Nekovich–Zambin mission.¹⁸ The Bulgarians were inspired to send their own delegation to the Russian capital by a slightly earlier initiative of the Serbs, who sought support in their fight against the rebellious Turks first in Austria (which had decided to remain neutral) and then in the Russian state. The very idea of sending a deputation, however, has Bulgarian roots, and its genesis is to be sought in a meeting of the Bulgarian elite in Vratsa, from where two of its representatives, Atanas Nikolaev Nekovich and Ivan Atanasov Zambin,¹⁹ were later to set off.

¹⁷ K. Popek, B. Rusin, op. cit., p. 199–210; Ц. Генов, *Българите и руско-турските войни XVIII–XIX век*, София 1987, p. 46–65; С. Дойнов, *Българите и руско-турските войни 1774–1856*, София 1987, p. 65–92.

¹⁸ Some researchers reject the view that the action taken by Nekovich and Zambin can be treated as an official diplomatic mission as early as 1804. Until the end of 1807, before Sophronius joined them in sending letters of credence, they were *de facto* private individuals. Before the outbreak of the war, there was also no official political organization of Bulgarian emigration on Romanian soil; В. Рачева, *Въпросителни около политическата дейност на Софроний Врачански*, “История” 1995, no. 1, p. 36.

¹⁹ In older studies, one can find the opinions that the idea of sending a Bulgarian delegation emerged among the Bulgarian emigration in Wallachia, or that the two deputies went to Russia guided solely by their patriotism and pointing out the acts of barbarism committed by the insurgent Turkish/Ottoman troops against the Bulgarian population (the example of the destruction of Teteven, Nekovich’s hometown in 1801). Zlatarski also mentions a secret Russian emissary who allegedly appeared in the area in late 1800; his identity has not yet been established. If in fact the two delegates were guided only by their private motivations, it means that no larger group of people participated in the decision-making, much less acted in an organized manner as representatives of the Bulgarian people as a whole; В.Н. Златарски, *Политическата роля на Софроний Врачански през Руско-турската война 1806–1812 г.*, “Годишник на Софийския Университет. Историко-филологически факултет” 1923, vol. XIX, no. 3, p. 7. By using documents from Russian archives, however, it was possible to establish that the idea of sending a delegation to Russia had purely Bulgarian roots; В.Д. Конобеев, *Българското националноосвободително движение. Идеология, програма, развитие*, София 1972, p. 86–87; С. Дойнов, *Българското национално-освободително движение*, p. 66–67. Stefan Doynov also quotes in his monograph an excerpt from a letter from Gen. M. Miloradovich, which shows that a larger group of people knew about the mission of Nekovich and Zambin: “(...) seven people know [about the delegation], among the most prominent citizens of Vratsa”; *ibidem*, p. 67 (all translations from Bulgarian and Russian, unless otherwise noted, were made by the author of this text). Biographical data on the two delegates is quite limited. It is known that both were descendants of well-known Bulgarian families and representatives of the nascent Bulgarian bourgeoisie, having obtained their fortunes through trade. They were also both supposed to be highly educated individuals with knowledge of several foreign languages, which, in a way, predestined them to undertake a diplomatic mission in the Russian capital; С. Дойнов, *Българското национално-освободително движение*, p. 74–75. We have slightly more information on the life and activities of Atanas Nekovich; П. Бояджиев, *За личността и обществената дейност на Атанас Некович*, “Векове” 1981, vol. 5, p. 43–47. More extensively on the functioning of Bulgarian emigration from the city of Teteven and its environs during the Renaissance; Н. Жечев, *Из историята на*

According to Stefan Doynov, the two delegates left Vratsa in late August or early September 1804 and, after a brief stopover in Bucharest, arrived in St. Petersburg in mid-October. From the onset, the problem was the lack of any official documents authenticating their mission, which the Russian administration cleverly exploited by postponing any serious discussions with the Bulgarian delegates until the relevant letters were in their possession. Their request for financial assistance and permission to travel to Wallachia, where they could continue their activities on behalf of the Bulgarian people, was also met with refusal. Nekovich and Zambin's request was personally rejected by Tsar Alexander I, motivating his decision by the two delegates' earlier refusal to take possession of land on the Crimean Peninsula. Eventually, due to the rapidly changing international situation and the outbreak of the Russo-Turkish War, the right to leave was granted to Nekovich, while Zambin remained in St. Petersburg (where he died in the fall of 1808).²⁰

From the beginning, Sophronius took part in organizing the deputation to St. Petersburg, reasserting his participation in a conversation with a Russian diplomat I. Fonton. Hence, it may seem incomprehensible that the delegates did not receive any official letter from Sophronius confirming their role and the nature of the mission they undertook. However, the former bishop of Vratsa (he lost his title in 1804) was at the same time careful to maintain maximum discretion (initially signing his name on the documents as a Serbian hierarch) due to the fact that his son Ivan, who was engaged in trade, was living and working in Constantinople. The cleric's cautious attitude stemmed from a desire to protect his person from possible danger that could have arisen if his father's contacts with the Russian staff had been discovered.²¹ There is also another interpretation of Sophronius's "silence", which lasted practically until the end of 1807, before Russian officers established permanent and direct contact with him. Namely, it concerns the question of whether and to what extent Sophronius felt he could confer such power of attorney to the Bulgarian delegates residing in St. Petersburg. As some scholars point out, he believed that a broader group of people should first be organized to jointly lend their support to the actions of Nekovich and Zambin, creating the impression that they had the support of the Bulgarian elite, and not just Sophronius himself, who was otherwise highly respected among his own people at home, but was initially poorly recognized in the Romanian lands.²²

тетевенската емиграция в Румъния през възраждането [in:] *Тетевен. Сборник*, ed. И. Унджиев, София 1977, p. 42–71.

²⁰ *Прошение от Замбина и Николова* (sic!), *от март 1806 год.*, no. 15 [in:] П. Орешков, *op. cit.*, p. 46–47; В.Н. Златарски, *Първите „български депутати“ в Русия*, "Българска историческа библиотека" 1928, vol. 3, p. 116–117; В. Рачева, *Неприметным образом. Начало болгарско-российских политических контактов при Александре I*, "Российский исторический журнал Родина" 2009, vol. 6, p. 37–40.

²¹ С. Дойнов, *Българското национално-освободително движение*, p. 72–73.

²² Sophronius's popularity in Bucharest increased significantly after the printed publication of "Kiriakodromion" in 1806. He himself spoke of it to General Mikhail Miloradovich as follows: "through-

The delegates themselves, moreover, turned for the power of attorney not to him, but to their compatriots living in Vratsa. In the end, Sophronius signed the ready-made proxy form received from Zambin, but this did not happen until January 1808.²³

Soon the Russian staff received an order from the head of the Interior Ministry, Alexei Kurakin, to establish contact with Sophronius and to prepare a report on the current situation in the Bulgarian lands and the characteristics of the cleric himself.²⁴ This task was entrusted to General Mikhail Miloradovich, who met with Sophronius in June 1808. During the course of the conversation, he reasserted his conviction that Zambin and Nekovich represent the wider Bulgarian society and not just themselves, while assuring the cleric that they were well received in St. Petersburg and could expect comprehensive assistance from Russia. At the same time, Sophronius was given the opportunity to directly address the head of the Russian Foreign Ministry, Prince Nikolai Rumyantsev, which he did in his letter of June 8 (20), 1808. In the letter, he thanked the minister for the good reception of the delegates, also emphasizing the plight of the Bulgarian population in the lands on the right bank of the Danube and expressing the devotion of all Bulgarians to the Russian people: "(...) because they are closer to Russians, not only through the same religion, but also through language, and of all nations they are the most devoted to the Russian state."²⁵ The change in Sophronius's own position on the expectations that the Bulgarians had of the Russian Empire and the ongoing war is particularly noteworthy. As late as in January, he wrote about the Bulgarians coming under Russian subjection, while later he asked only for the protectorate of the Russian authorities and army. He expressed the same opinion during the aforementioned conversation with Gen. Miloradovich, stressing that a similar wish was held by all the Bulgarians he encountered while traveling in the native lands ("everywhere the wish of the people was to pass under the protec-

out the period since I have been here [...]. Bulgarians from the other side of the Danube have been coming to me asking for help and advice"; В.Д. Конобеев, *Българското националноосвободително движение*, p. 88–89.

²³ В. Рачева, *Въпросителни около политическата дейност*, p. 35–36. Earlier Zambin had received other powers of attorney from Sophronius, but in his correspondence with Nekovich he expressed deep dissatisfaction about their form and content. He pointed out that in his letter Sophronius addressed not the Russian government, as should have been done, but General Gorich, the liaison between the Bulgarian delegates and the tsarist authorities. The letter from the former bishop of Vratsa also lacked the explanation of the delegates' motives for going to Russia, and did not indicate which social circles they represented. This provoked Zambin to prepare his own proxy form, which he sent to Sophronius for signature in December 1807; В.Д. Конобеев, *Българското националноосвободително движение*, p. 92–93.

²⁴ *Письмо Н.П. Румянцева А.А. Прозоровскому, 18 май, 1808 г.* [in:] В.Д. Конобеев, Е.М. Шатохина, *Из истории политических связей России с руководителями национально-освободительного движения Болгарии в 1806–1812 гг.*, "Известия на Института за История" 1968, vol. 20, pp. 346–347.

²⁵ В.Д. Конобеев, *Българското националноосвободително движение*, p. 97.

tion of Russia”).²⁶ For the time being, however, this was unfeasible – coming to the Bulgarians’ real aid would have required Russia to cross the Danube line and seize Bulgarian lands, meanwhile after the truce at Slobozia hostilities were halted until the spring of 1809.

The Russian plan included the arduous capture of Turkish strongholds, but initially there was little success. Only the assumption of supreme command of the Danube Army by Gen. Peter Bagration (after the death of Gen. Prozorovsky) led to the capture of the fortresses at Brăila and Izmail. The Russian army crossed the Danube, but was forced to retreat after the unsuccessful siege of Silistra. Hostilities resumed in February 1810, with General Sergei Kamensky already in command, and he achieved a number of successes on Bulgarian soil. He captured Silistra, Pazardzhik and Razgrad, and Turkish garrisons in Ruschuk (now Ruse) and Giurgiu soon capitulated. However, the Bulgarians’ hopes of Russian assistance and gaining any form of autonomy from Constantinople proved faint. On Napoleon’s orders, the tsar ordered the withdrawal of Russian troops beyond the Danube, which took place in late 1810.²⁷

Two appeals by Sophronius, addressed to the Bulgarian people asking them to help the Russian army crossing the Danube, are known from this period. The first dates from March 21 (April 2) 1810 at the latest, while the second was announced in September or October of the same year. As before, it was the Russian side that took the initiative to contact Sophronius, but this time the relevant order was given by General Bagration, who wanted to win the favor of the Bulgarian population even before the start of military operations on the right bank of the Danube.²⁸ This task was entrusted to the Russian diplomat Fonton, who met with the former Bishop of Vratsa in December 1809 in Bucharest. The meeting was held in secret. Sophronius once again pointed out the problem of looting and murdering civilians in the revolted areas of Bulgaria, taking the success of a possible uprising into consideration, but nevertheless warned that the activation of the masses should take place gradually and in parallel with the process of capturing Bulgarian territories by the Russian army. Otherwise, the Bulgarians were to maintain a far-reaching restraint regarding participation in military actions and “(...) keep their feelings [toward Russia] secret”. He also asked that the Bulgarians not be betrayed, just as the Greeks were betrayed by the Russians in the peace signed at Kuchuk Kajnardı in 1774.²⁹

²⁶ Ibid, p. 98–100. A similar evolution can be seen in the case of the boyars and clergy of Moldavia and Wallachia. As late as the autumn of 1807, they asked Russia to annex the Danube principalities; by the middle of the following year, their appeal to Tsar Alexander I already spoke only of extending Russian protection to this population. В. Рачева, *Въпросителни около политическата дейност*, p. 37.

²⁷ W. Morawski, P. Szawlowska, op. cit., p. 104–106.

²⁸ For his part, Bagration also forbade Russian troops crossing the Danube to carry out any looting or physical violence against the local population, indicating that efforts should be made to build the confidence of Bulgarian society in Russia and Russian policy; *Приказ П.И. Багратиона войскам Молдавской армии, 7 сентября, 1809 г.* [in:] В.Д. Конобеев, Е.М. Шатохина, op. cit., p. 348–349.

²⁹ *Изложение письма И.П. Фонтон П.И. Багратиону, 29 декабря, 1809 г.* [in:] ibidem, p. 353.

In his exhortation prepared in March 1810, Sophronius (in order to keep his participation secret he used the name Seraphim) wrote to Bulgarians that here comes the “sunny day” of their liberation and salvation, which they have been awaiting for 400 years. He urged his compatriots to give aid to the Russian army, stressing that they had nothing to fear, as nothing would be taken from them by force. What’s more, they can expect to receive payment from the tsar for their assistance, since his goal is first and foremost to take care of and defend the Bulgarians from torment and destruction by Turkish troops. The document echoes the spirit of Slavic community and the common origin of Bulgarians and Russians, and emphasizes the unity of faith between the two peoples.³⁰ At the same time, Sophronius most likely refused to return to Bulgarian lands – he was urged to do so by General Kamensky – under the pretext of his old age and poor health.³¹

In a summons drafted in the autumn of 1810 (already using the name Sophronius), the Bulgarian clergyman thanked in his introduction the providence for granting the Russian emperor, who was so dear to the hearts of the Bulgarians, for it was in Russian strength that he saw the main reason why a part of the Bulgarian lands had been liberated. He pointed out the necessity for the Bulgarian people to remain united, as internal divisions were, in his opinion, to be the reason for the collapse of statehood at the end of the 14th century. Without having a sufficient understanding of what the current political situation was like and what Russia’s goals were, he expressed confidence that it would be possible now to obtain for Bulgaria not only autonomy, but also independence.³² This exhortation by Sophronius was read in Orthodox churches north of the Stara Planina mountain range, areas overrun by Russian troops. There was no encouragement in it – as in the previous one – to organize an anti-Turkish uprising, but such events occurred nonetheless. As Russian troops approached Razgrad, the people of Arnaut Kui (today’s Poroishte) and other surrounding villages joined the fight. In Razgrad itself, there was also the formation of a detachment composed of Bulgarians, which took part in military operations alongside the tsarist troops.³³

³⁰ В.Д. Конобеев, *Българското националноосвободително движение*, р. 132–133.

³¹ К. Велики, *Политическата дейност на българската емиграция във Влахия в първите две десетилетия на XIX век* [in:] idem, *Страници от миналото на българския народ*, София 1987, р. 58. Bulgarian historiography so far has not taken a unified position on this issue. Some historians claim that Sophronius may have found himself on Bulgarian soil following Russian troops, where he urged them to support the Russians in battle. Others reject such claims, citing precisely the Bulgarian cleric’s advanced age and poor health; П. Митев, *Политическата дейност на Софроний Врачански в контекста на Новото време* [in:] *Софроний Врачански – книжовник и политик от новото време. Сборник с материали от международна научна конференция, София, 24 ноември 2011 г.*, eds. П. Митев, В. Рачева, София 2013, р. 133; С. Дойнов, *Българското национално-освободително движение*, р. 172–173.

³² *Послание Софрония Врачанского болгарскому народу, сентябрь–октябрь, 1810 г.* [in:] В.Д. Конобеев, Е.М. Шатохина, op. cit., р. 362–373.

³³ В.Д. Конобеев, *Българското националноосвободително движение*, р. 137–140.

Undoubtedly, both of Sophronius's writings came to the assistance for both the authorities and the Russian staff, which envisioned neither the permanent control of the lands on the right bank of the Danube, nor the creation of some form of Bulgarian statehood. This was related, on the one hand, to the delicate position Russia occupied in its relations with Napoleonic France – it should be recalled that it was under French pressure that Russian troops withdrew from Bulgarian lands at the end of 1810 – and, on the other hand, St. Petersburg was unable to field a sufficiently large number of troops capable of subduing or *de facto* dismembering Turkish territories in the Balkans. This was also contrary to the Russian assumptions made at the beginning of the war – the tsarist administration limited its interest to the territory of Bessarabia and the Danube principalities from the very beginning, without considering at all the possibility of acquiring territorial acquisitions on the right bank of the Danube. Similar instructions were given to all subsequent commanders-in-chief of the Russian army in the Balkans. General Kamensky, too, was aware from the start that he could not promise anything to the Bulgarians. However, he estimated that Sophronius's proclamations to the Bulgarian people would benefit the fighting troops, in the form of assistance provided by the local population, hence he encouraged the patriarch all the more to take such action.³⁴

Together with the Russian troops, more groups of Bulgarians, Gagauz and representatives of other nationalities withdrew to Wallachia and Moldova in late 1810. Above all, the Danube was crossed by troops from the Razgrad area who had previously fought alongside the Russians, as well as by all the residents of the village of Arnaut Kui, but also civilians from other places, fearing revenge from the Turks.³⁵ The Russian retreat made a strong impression on Sophronius, and he was all the more preoccupied with the fate of the Bulgarian population displaced beyond the Danube, which was already in his sphere of interest. The cleric was concerned about Russian plans to resettle the emigrants in the Novorossiysk lands, which was handled by a special chancellery set up at the Russian headquarters back at the beginning of the war. It was headed by Councillor Anton (Antonio) Coronelli,³⁶ who cooperated, among others, with Russian Governor General Prince Armand de Richelieu,³⁷ in carrying out this task. Russian officials, understanding well that promises alone would not get the

³⁴ Н. Червенков, *Болгары в русско-турецкой войне 1806–1812 гг.: политические идеи*, “Русин” 2011, no. 1 (23), p. 76–78.

³⁵ On emigration from these and other Bulgarian areas, K. Popek, B. Rusin, op. cit., p. 45–54.

³⁶ On the subject of this colorful character Е. Иванов, Дж. Коронелли, *Книга Коронелло. Исторические исследования. Мемуары*, Москва 2011.

³⁷ *Письмо Софрония Врачанского А.Я. Коронелли, 16 мая, 1811 г.* [in:] В.Д. Конобеев, Е.М. Шагохина, op. cit., p. 375–376. More extensively on the activities of Russian Governor General Г. Аствацатуров, *Новорусийскят генерал-губернатор Е.О. Ришельо и преселването на българи по време на Руско-турската война от 1806–1812 г. (нови документални данни за заселването на българските колонии в Херсонска губерния)* [in:] *Българите в северното причерноморие. Изследвания и материали*, т. 5, ред. П. Тодоров, Велико Търново 1996, p. 255–262.

Bulgarians to agree to leave, offered a number of privileges – including, for example, land holdings, exemption for a limited period from paying taxes and military service, or financial assistance for the period of travel and immediately after resettlement until the first harvest. For the most part, the Bulgarians did not want to resettle once again, in which they were assisted by Sophronius, who persuaded General Mikhail Kutuzov to cancel previous Russian orders and leave the Bulgarian population where it was currently living. Kutuzov himself understood that forced resettlement could provoke a negative reaction from the Slavic population, not just Bulgarians, and therefore proposed sending a small Bulgarian delegation to Russia so that they could see for themselves the conditions there and report back to others upon their return.³⁸

At the same time, the Bulgarian bourgeoisie undertook to develop a new plan to resolve the situation of the Bulgarians residing in the Danube principalities. In accordance with the hopes of the Bulgarian elite, Russia was to annex these lands and establish a new border on the Danube, while at the same time taking care of the resettled population, in line with Sophronius's request, formulated in a letter to Russian Foreign Minister Rumyantsev back in 1809. Differences of opinion between the Bulgarian emigration with its most important representative, and the Russian commander-in-chief, on the question of the conditions under which the Bulgarian population could settle in the principalities, led them to formulate a fifteen-point plan for the creation of a "semi-autonomous Bulgarian state"³⁹ in the lands north of the Danube (see Appendix, the entire document translated there). It was presented to Gen. M. Kutuzov in Bucharest on May 29 (June 10) 1811. Bulgarian historiography considers this document as the first substantive political program of the Bulgarian bourgeoisie.⁴⁰

The document was prepared by Sophronius Vrachanski, who acted as a representative of all Bulgarians residing in the principalities. The very first paragraph defined the territorial extent of the autonomous Bulgarian province, which was to extend from the town of Turnu Măgurele, located southwest of Bucharest, to Galați, located near today's Romanian-Moldavian border. In the document, the Bulgarians reserved a number of concessions and privileges for themselves, similar to those offered to them if they wanted to resettle in Russian territories. According to the program's provisions, they were to be exempt from paying taxes for a period of 10 years and from military service (leaving them free to choose in this regard), as well as to be granted autonomy in religious, judicial and educational matters. A very important point was the desire to gain independence from the authorities of the Danube principalities, so that they could not impose burdens and interfere with

³⁸ К. Калчев, *Ролята на руските власти в началното организиране и устройване на българските колонии* [in:] *idem, Българската етническа общност в Бесарабия (XIX–XX в.). Възникване, развитие, принос в общонационалните процеси*, Велико Търново 2009, p. 52–56.

³⁹ This is what the researcher of Sophronius's biography, Vanya Racheva, calls this document; В. Рачева, *Въпросителни около политическата дейност*, p. 31.

⁴⁰ Д. Дойнов, И. Стоянов, *Възобновяването на българската държавност 1762–1878 г. Идеи и проекти*, Варна 2002, p. 15.

the free development of the Bulgarian emigrant community in these lands. The program also envisioned the possibility of resettling in these territories more groups of Bulgarians living on the right bank of the Danube, who would be forced to emigrate due to Turkish tyranny and oppression. Researchers of the subject point to a very strongly expressed desire in the document to preserve the Bulgarians as a separate community, helped by cultural and religious autonomy. On the other hand, they also point to some far-reaching tendencies evident in the letter – the desire for no longer just economic, but also political recognition for the Bulgarian community against other groups living in the territories. This can be seen in point 15 of the program, which from today's perspective seems highly controversial. According to some historians, however, this was all about the protectionism of some sort, aimed primarily at ensuring the conditions for the development of Bulgarian trade and defending the interests of the young bourgeoisie against the competition from Jews and “heretics”, by which term one should most likely understand Old Believers or nekrasovian Cossacks.⁴¹

As Constantin Velichi points out, the plan of Sophronius and the group of activists around him was prepared at a time when there was a significant group of emigrants from Bulgarian lands in the Romanian principalities.⁴² Their status remained unclear, and with agitation for further resettlement in Russia, this state of affairs had to be changed as soon as possible.⁴³ This was because they did not want to be allowed to dissolve into the mass of foreign ethnic groups, all the more reason to hope for at least a partial return of them to their native lands. Rumyana Radkova points out an interesting point, namely that this was most likely not an original text prepared by Sophronius, but a creative development of the original of a very similar plan prepared almost 100 years earlier by Bulgarian Catholics living in Austria.⁴⁴ The second issue

⁴¹ Ibidem, p. 15–16. See С. Дойнов, *Българското национално-освободително движение*, p. 181–184. Other scholars, on the other hand, point out that the negative references to the Jews as a group were a kind of topos, in opposition to which the Bulgarians emphasized their faith in Christ and their native land. This was to be the case with Sophronius, emphasizing elsewhere his personal positive experiences in dealing with the representatives of this group; О. Тодорова, *Евреите в българската словесност от началото на XIX век до Освобождението*, “Либерален Преглед” 2012, no. 3, p. 274.

⁴² К. Велики, *Емигрирането на Българите във Влахия по време на руско-турската война от 1806–1812 година* [in:] idem, *Страници от миналото*, p. 35–37. Constantin Velichi's article was originally published in Romanian: *Emigrarea bulgarilor în Țara Românească în timpul războiului ruso-turc din 1806–1812*, “Romanoslavica” 1963, vol. 8, p. 37–68.

⁴³ The greatest exodus of civilians occurred during the period when M. Kutuzov held the position of commander-in-chief of the Russian army. The Russians burned many villages along the banks of the Danube, often forcing the population to cross the river and making it impossible to return. This was the case, for example, with the residents of Svishtov; В. Манчев, *Спомени. Дописки. Писма*, София 1982, p. 25–26. On other Danube cities, К. Попек, В. Русин, op. cit., p. 49–60.

⁴⁴ Р. Радкова, *Една хипотеза за исторически връзки между сбългарската католическа и православна емиграция* [in:] *300 години Чипровско въстание (Принос към историята на българите през XVII в.)*, София 1988, p. 345–346. This assessment is challenged by Plamen Mitev, who recognizes the similarity between the two documents in his text, but at the same time argues that des-

concerns Sophronius' two proclamations in the spring and fall of 1810 addressed to the Bulgarian population. According to Vanya Racheva's findings, the idea of writing the two appeals came neither from the former bishop of Vratsa nor from the Russian staff. The campaign in Bulgarian lands was said to have been originated by Manuk bey Mârzayan,⁴⁵ an Armenian merchant and diplomat, former translator (dragoman) of the Sultan's court. The authorship of the idea that after the Russian troops crossed the Danube, they would get help from 10,000 volunteer Bulgarians was also attributed to him. According to another legendary version concerning the actions of the aforementioned figure, it was also in his palace in Bucharest that a peace treaty ending the conflict was to be signed.⁴⁶

Later, the ideas contained in the 15-point plan were taken over – due to Sophronius's deteriorating health and death – by a poet Dmitry Popski, one of the activists gathered around the cleric.⁴⁷ As late as 1813, he issued a special address to the Bulgarian people, in which he called for a national liberation struggle to the best of their ability, and pointed to the example of neighboring nations (Greeks, Serbs and the people of Wallachia) who had already managed to achieve some degree of independence from Constantinople.⁴⁸ Sophronius's intention to retain as much of the population as possible in the Romanian lands succeeded, regardless of the unfavorable change in the position of commander-in-chief of the Russian army. For after Kutuzov, these duties were taken over by Admiral Pavel Chichagov, who cared little for their needs, and also ordered the payment of all outstanding taxes and abolished existing privileges. This activated the group of emigrants (otherwise small compared to those who chose to stay) to continue traveling and settling in Russian Budjak, as they did not want to be subject to the authority of the boyars.⁴⁹

pitate this fact it cannot be concluded that Sophronius took over the concepts of the Bulgarian Catholics; П. Митев, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

⁴⁵ S. Costache, *From Ruscuk to Bessarabia: Manuk Bey and the Career of an Ottoman-Russian Middleman at the Beginning of the 19th Century*, "Tarih ve Coğrafya Araştırmaları Dergisi" 2017, vol. 3, no. 1, p. 23–43.

⁴⁶ В. Рачева, *Политикът Софроний Врачански и руската преселническа политика по време на руско-турската война (1806–1812)* [in:] *Софроний Врачански – книжовник и политик от новото време*, p. 136, 144–145. On the role of Manuk bey in the preparation and signing of the Bucharest Peace Treaty of 1812: V. Mischevca, *Din culisele diplomatice ale semnării tratatului de pace de la București: rolul lui Manuc Bey* [in:] *Latinitate, Romanitate, Românită*, vol. 5, ed. L. Rotaru, Chișinău 2022, p. 244–265.

⁴⁷ So far we do not have a complete list of people who gathered around Sophronius during the conflict. A historian Stefan Doynov lists the following names: in addition to those already indicated in the text of A. Nekovich and I. Zambin, there were Dmitry Popsky, as well as: Ivan Karanikolov from the village of Kermen near Sliven, Archimandrite Benjamin Lovchanski, Simeon Kiparis from Vratsa, Haji Ilya Panov from Stara Zagora, and Petar Sarchoolu; С. Дойнов, *Българското национално-освободително движение*, p. 172.

⁴⁸ Ibidem, p. 184. see: В.Д. Конобеев, Б. Райков, *Обръщение на българската емиграция в Букурещ от 1813 към българския народ*, "ИНБКМ" 1971, vol. 12, p. 72–86.

⁴⁹ К. Ропек, В. Rusin, *op. cit.*, p. 58–59, 61; С. Дойнов, *Българи в Украйна и Молдова*, p. 82–83.

At the beginning of the article we also mentioned a translation of the treatise *Theatrum politicum* by Ambrosio Marliani, first published in Rome in 1621. This was yet another work, referring in its content to Nicolo Machiavelli's *The Prince* and treating the question of the ideal ruler, conceived, however, in a completely different way than presented in the original from the first half of the 16th century. Sophronius completed a translation of the text in 1809,⁵⁰ based on one of the versions in Greek, which was not completely faithful to the original written in Latin. As researchers point out, Marliani's work influenced both the translation of that year and the cleric's translation of "Philosophical Wisdoms" ("Философския мудрости") of 1802, which was eventually included, as part four, in the "Second Vidin sbornik".⁵¹ Like the other parts, this one also had didactic purposes and political overtones, referring to historical figures of philosophers or rulers, such as Alexander the Great, whom Sophronius referred to most often in both texts. Thus, he was interested in political matters at an earlier period, before he took the trouble to be active in this field himself. As R. Adinolfi points out, Sophronius additionally raised in his works the importance and power of Russia (relative to the Greek text) and the prestige of the Orthodox Church.⁵² At the same time, he criticized the low level of development of the Bulgarian population, which, in his opinion, should make a greater effort to raise the level of culture, which was to be done through the development of education. This was the only way, in his opinion, to liberate Bulgaria from Turkish oppression in the future.⁵³ There are, of course, many more themes appearing in both texts of the Bulgarian clergyman, as both refer to many contexts and eras in European culture and history. To some extent, these experiences shaped his political thought, which was expressed in the subsequent exhortations written to the Bulgarian people and, above all, in the fifteen-point plan for the creation of Bulgarian autonomy, which represents the apogee of the ideological achievements of the Bulgarian emigration of the early 19th century.⁵⁴

The end of the war and the terms of the peace treaty signed in Bucharest on May 16 (28), 1812, disappointed the Bulgarians. Indeed, they did not manage to obtain any concessions or privileges, which was the case even with their neighbors, the Serbs. Sophronius's views from this period are not known. In fact, traces of his

⁵⁰ There is doubt among scholars whether Sophronius was actually the author of the translation, or whether he merely transcribed and signed with his name the work of another author; H. Аретов, *op. cit.*, p. 92–93.

⁵¹ Р. Адинолфи, *Италианската книга „Theatrum Politicum“ на Амброджо Марлиани и нейната връзка със софрониевите преводни творби „Гражданское позорище“ и „Философския мудрости“*, "Пловдивски Университет 'Паисий Хилендарски' – България. Научни трудове – Филология" 2014, vol. 52, no. 1, p. 20–21.

⁵² In his translation, Sophronius also gave an uncritically positive assessment of the actions of Empresses Anna and Elizabeth, who removed the Jews from Russia. Once again, he treated them here as a group, and therefore negatively. О. Тодорова, *op. cit.*, p. 270.

⁵³ Р. Адинолфи, *op. cit.*, p. 26, 28.

⁵⁴ He discusses extensively in his text the issue of both translations of Sophronius by Nikola Aretov H. Аретов, *op. cit.*, p. 87–116.

political activity during the war broke off as late as 1811, when he was confined to bed for more than two months due to a serious illness. During this time he remained under the care of his family. At the same time, between the beginning of that year and the spring of 1812, Sophronius served as an abbot of Michael Voyevoda Orthodox Church in Bucharest, resigning from his post after the signing of the peace treaty. He remained under the care of his family until his death.⁵⁵ More significant initiatives of other activists gathered around the clergyman are also lacking, except for the call of D. Popsky, written, however, after the conflict had already ended, and the actions of Atanas Nekovich. The latter, after receiving guarantees from Adm. Chichagov, remained in Wallachia, where he tried to take care of the needs of emigrants. In 1819 he also went on a mission to Constantinople (together with his nephew Alexander Pavlovich), where he wanted to appeal to the Sultan to improve the living conditions of the Bulgarian population. This task failed – nevertheless, Russian diplomatic representative G. Stroganov also insisted that the two of them take steps to calm the mood of the population on both sides of the Danube in view of the growing support for the Filiki Eteria movement and the activity of Tudor Vladimirescu in Romanian lands.⁵⁶

The activities of Sophronius Vrachanski and the circle of activists gathered around him, constituted an important stage in the national liberation struggle, despite the fact that they failed to achieve virtually any lasting gains. It is pointed out in this context, first of all, that it was at this moment in history that the Bulgarians for the first time established their own political organization,⁵⁷ which, despite its undoubted weaknesses (few in number and financially weak, lacking wider influence) undertook a number of activities to support the Russian staff and troops, popularize the Bulgarian cause at the tsarist court and care for the vast mass of emigrants. There was a widespread notion among them of Russia's pivotal role in Bulgaria's liberation, although in the course of the conflict a change was apparent in the question of what their degree of dependence on the eastern power was to be. As late as in the first phase of the war, both Nekovich, Zambin and Sophronius were still contemplating a direct adoption of the authority of the tsar (this is clear from the contents of the proxies written by Nekovich and Sophronius' 1808 proclamation), but later this idea gave way to another, namely, coming under Russian protection, or in other words, establishing a kind of protectorate over Bulgarian autonomy – or as some scholars believe – “semi-autonomy”. We must also bear in mind here that at the time the document was prepared, the Bulgarians were convinced that the planned territorial unit would be within the borders of the Russian state, which was to reach as far as the Danube (sic!). Vanya Racheva also points out that Sophronius's 15-point plan remained the best conceptu-

⁵⁵ N. Dura, *op. cit.*, p. 40–41.

⁵⁶ К. Велики, *Политическата дейност на българската емиграция във Влахия в първите две десетилетия на XIX в.* [in:] *idem*, *Страници от миналото*, p. 69–70.

⁵⁷ С. Дойнов, *Българското национално-освободително движение*, p. 178.

ally prepared indigenous political plan until the 1850s.⁵⁸ The fact that the representatives of the Bulgarian elite at the time took into account that Russia would reach so far south with its borders clearly indicates their significant lack of political sophistication still at that time and their complete ignorance of Russian goals and policies. During this period, as well as in the next few decades, the idea of liberation with the help of Russia remained a dogma in domestic political thought.

APPENDIX⁵⁹

15-point request from Sophronius Vrachanski to Gen. M. Kutuzov, Bucharest, May 29 (June 10) 1811

A request from all the Bulgarians staying here⁶⁰

1. On the left bank of the Danube, the right to hold land [for Bulgarians – B.R.] into hereditary possession should be asserted, starting from Turnu Măgurele, through Zimnicea, Slobozia, Zhužia [that is the notation in the original, the mention is about Giurgiu], Brailova [Brăila], Galați, as well as in the places where they choose to settle, with acreage sufficient for farming, haying, growing vines, establishing fruit orchards, producing silk, and setting up various factories, businesses, and raising cattle.

2. An exemption should be granted to all sub-taxes for a period of 10 years, not only for Bulgarians currently settling on the left bank of the Danube, but also those who, learning of the donated rights, decide to settle here. Also, many of the Bulgarians who, due to Turkish oppression and tyranny, have left their homeland for some time, resettling in Moldova and Wallachia, where they live thanks to various types of support, if they decide to settle with their fellow Bulgarians, should be welcomed and allowed to enjoy the rights enjoyed by others on an equal footing.

⁵⁸ В. Рачева, *Руската политика и българската идея за политическа автономия в някои изяви на емиграцията от първата половина на XIX в.*, “Исторически Преглед” 2006, vol. 1–2, p. 46–49.

⁵⁹ The present translation was made by the author from Russian, based on a document published in Д. Дойнов, И. Стоянов, op. cit., p. 157–159. The program has been published in many volumes. Those interested can be referred to, among others, the following items: В.Д. Конобеев, Е.М. Шатохина, op. cit., p. 377–379 (in Russian); Г. Плетньов, И. Стоянов, *Планове и програми в националноосвободителното движение през Възраждането (Сборник документи)*, Велико Търново 1988, p. 11–13 (in Russian); К. Велики, *Емигрирането на Българите във Влахия по време на руско-турската война от 1806–1812 година* [in:] idem, *Страници от миналото*, p. 35–37 (in Bulgarian). Of more recent items, one can also point to a collection of documents prepared by Petko Petkov: *Документи за новата история на България XIX – началото на XX век*, Велико Търново 2002, p. 99–101 (in Bulgarian).

⁶⁰ “Here”, that is, in the territory of the Danube principalities.

3. Church buildings, in all cities where [Bulgarians] will be settled, need to be supplied with money from the budget.⁶¹ Clergy and clergy assistants are to be chosen from among the clergy now on the ground from among their own people, and after their deaths to choose new ones independently also from their own people.

4. In each of their cities, there ought to be appointed one doctor and his assistants, who will be paid from the state budget.

5. A court in each Bulgarian city needs to be organized under the name of “magistrate”, to which the best representatives of the people will be elected every three years, serving as judges, secretaries and clerical staff paid from the state budget.

6. Schools in every Bulgarian city ought to be established for the education of young people in various languages. To appoint an appropriate number of teachers, who will be paid from the state budget. These schools will be supervised by Bulgarian magistrates.

7. Bulgarian towns and villages have to be exempted from the obligation to quarter the army and maintain a post office.

8. A permission should be granted for them to send merchants to all ports and cities of the Russian Empire and abroad, as well as to have their own merchant ships. They ought to be made equal in rights with Russian merchants; a permission has to be granted for all products made by them to be sold in Wallachia, Moldova and all of Russia, also it should be allowed for Wallachian, Moldovan and Russian products to be imported duty-free, and all other goods imported from abroad be charged a single customs duty, after which they can be sold by Bulgarians at home as well as in Wallachia, Moldova and Russia without additional duties; goods bought in Russian ports and cities, for which duty has once been paid, after being loaded, ought to reach Bulgarian towns and villages by sea or land already without additional customs duties, which in Moldova and Wallachia exist in the form of various pretexts, burdening Bulgarians, in short, so that Moldovan and Wallachian governments and boyars cannot disturb the Bulgarian population, and their magistrates are dependent only on the Russian government.

9. Do not take Bulgarian recruits into the army against their will, and whoever decides to join the service, that one should be accepted; they should be released from service without the right of retention when they are no longer in strength to continue serving.

10. The lakes on the left bank of the Danube should be given to them in perpetual and hereditary possession for the purpose of industrial fishing, and their right to exercise this freedom should also be extended on the Danube.

11. There are families among the resettling Bulgarians who used the title of nobility in their homeland under Turkish rule, there are descendants of the old Bulgarian

⁶¹ Here Sophronius was referring to funds from the Russian state budget. The same comment also applies to the following points in the document.

aristocracy among them, they should not be deprived of this title and should be validated for all time.

12. To the poor and downtrodden to come, issue a pair of oxen and a cow each, and a certain sum of money on credit as you deem just, for the purpose of building houses for them and improving their situation.

13. Allow free trade in their cities and villages in wine and rakija, both in terms of retail and wholesale.

14. If, with divine help, the Russian arms succeed in annexing the lands on the right bank of the Danube to the Russian Empire, the Bulgarian resettlers, who have their native land and hereditary possession there, will be given the right to rule these lands.

15. Jews and heretics, both in cities and villages, are not allowed to settle among the Bulgarians, so as not to interfere with the development of their trade.

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