Mobile Elites: Bulgarian Emigrants in the Middle of the Nineteenth Century and the Accommodation of Difference in the Balkans

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This article addresses the issue of accommodating difference through an analysis of a specific group of mobile public actors who can be defined as “mobile elites.” Using the Bulgarian emigrants in the middle of the nineteenth century as a typical case of an exiled elite, I link this case to other European Romantic intellectuals and sketch a grand-scale scheme of regional traffic in ideas. I suggest that emigration as such instigates the consolidation of nationalist elites. Thus, elites can be viewed as large, separate, and often mobile groups, which negotiate their respective interests and search for compromises. I contend that mobile public actors influence the societies in which they dwell by creating sets of networks which stretch over the whole region. The notion of “mobile elites” can therefore be a helpful tool in defining emigrant intellectuals. Furthermore, the activities of these intellectuals shed light on the ways in which migrant groups seek accommodation, pursue their political aims, and attempt to find compromises which can eventually yield beneficial outcomes.

Keywords: migration, elite theory, social networking, Bulgarian nation and state-building, Georgi Rakovski, Hristo Botev, othering.

In 1877, Ivan Ivanov, the head of the “Society for the spread of education among the Bulgarians,” wrote a letter to Ivan Aksakov, a prominent Russian Slavophile, discussing the destinies of the many Bulgarian volunteers employed by the Russian Army in the Russian-Turkish war. These men were mostly young and active individuals living scattered in Romania and Serbia. Ivanov mentioned that these migrant-volunteers (around 200 people) were paid 15 rubles a day, which assured their wellbeing and covered most of their needs. Yet, these men became a highly problematic group to accommodate when they lost this income, leaving them in foreign lands without legitimate means of supporting themselves. Ivanov contended that “[m]any of them are incapable of work.”¹ They were primarily “hajduks,” i.e. outlaws, and their lifestyle preferences hardly coincided

¹ ГАРФ [GARF], Fond 1750 op. 2 ed. hr. 36.
with the grand-scale nation and state-building ideas cherished and preached by the mobile ideologists, who sought their cooperation.

Bulgarian vagabonds who found temporary or permanent shelter in Romania, Serbia or Russia represent a typical case of migrants who were led and coordinated by a cohort of intellectuals. The ideologists were a different type of migrants altogether: they were organizers involved in mediating relations between their compatriots, the Great Powers, and the host states in which they lived. They were emigrants, but their position was different from that of their less prominent peers in a number of subtle ways which made their voices convincing and their ideology significant to the local governments, their followers and even their opponents. Nevertheless, the reality of migration united them with a much larger mass of their misplaced compatriots.

Migration is a notion that refers to a wide array of mobile people, often ignoring the fundamental differences between various groups of individuals who are considered migrants. However, different clusters of migrants have different patterns of movement which cannot all be brought together under one umbrella term. Therefore, in this article, I explore a case of the accommodation of a foreign group by several host states. In other words, I am examining the case of an emigrant elite involved in what Joep Leerssen describes as “the cultivation of culture” and intellectual and artistic creativity. The issue emerges in the wake of population movements and remains vital in the process of negotiating difference in the Balkans, a region contested by the authors of multiple state-and nation-building projects during the long nineteenth century and beyond. Furthermore, the discourses initiated and perpetuated by the mobile elites persisted well beyond the nineteenth century, leaving their imprints on the ideologies, paths, and propagandistic strategies of their later adherents.

When examining the case of mobile elites, one can present them as arguably the most influential group of migrants, a group that has potential power to influence their less-engaged compatriots. Because of their ideological activities, the mobile elites can be regarded as a link between migrants and host states. I suggest that these elites can either facilitate or hamper the accommodation of their peers into a foreign society, while relying mostly on their vast social networking and knowledge exchange. I analyze the ways in which these networks

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2 Leerssen, *National Thought in Europe*, 186–204.
4 Ryan, Sales et. al, “Social Networks,” 672–90.
function by examining the example of the Bulgarian mid-nineteenth-century emigrants in Serbia, Romania, and Russia.

Building on Bernhard Giesen’s theory regarding intellectual elites which generate national communities, I use a comparative approach to differentiate groups of mobile ideologists from their less involved compatriots and to investigate the potential sway of their arguments among their respective national groups. Moreover, an analysis of the writings of the mobile elites offers an opportunity to trace their interconnections and follow their state-building plans, some of which later influenced regional politics. While many projects turned out to be wildly unsuccessful, most of them had lasting consequences. Lyuben Karavelov became an apostle of Balkan federalism for the future generations of socialists from the region. Hristo Botev claimed the place of a national Romantic poet, whose influence on Bulgarian literature crossed over into politics. Georgi Rakovski became an ideological symbol for the future generations of the Balkan politicians, and one could list many other similar examples.

The emigrants who left Bulgaria in the middle of the nineteenth century represent a typical case of an exiled elite that can be linked to other European nationalist intellectuals (such as the post-1849 Hungarian emigrants). They can be viewed as a large, separate, transnational group, which negotiated its national interests and searched for compromises. Although they did not necessarily contribute to the economic development of their host states, they initiated and influenced the regional traffic in ideas, promoting and cultivating their national culture and state-building aspirations.

I begin by analyzing the concept of mobile elites and examining how the multiple identities of migrants can facilitate the accommodation of their national group in a host state or influence the politics within the borders of their own country. The second section of my essay deals with the networking systems developed and sustained by the emigrants and their methods of transmitting information that influenced their societies and those of others. It also addresses the idea of a common space shared by the European Romantic elites, which enabled them to promote their state-building and nation-building ideas and defend the rights of their respective groups internationally. The final section explores the impact of the mobile elites on their peers and host-societies.

7 Rakovski’s fame subsequently resulted in the appearance of numerous biographies and memoirs written by his revolutionary peers, who drew inspiration from his works.
and examines how the extent of this impact was determined by their active networking, lack of resources, or proposed goals.

**Mobile Elites and Their Troublesome Identities: Refugees, Emigrants, Exiles, and Romantic Heroes**

The term “migrant” encompasses people with dramatically diverse lives, political views, and destinies. The story of the protagonists of the current article is not different. The nineteenth-century Bulgarian revolutionaries whose destinies have been thoroughly studied by researchers and iconised by their descendants comprised only a tiny share of all the Bulgarian migrants living in the Romanian cities of Brăila or Bucharest or settled in Odessa or Belgrade.\(^8\) One thinks of penniless hajduks and rich merchants when dealing with people who moved for economic or political reasons.

While most inquiries “encompass theories about the motivations for migrations, about how migration is shaped by local, regional, and international economies,”\(^9\) as well as other important interdependencies, the classification of migrants as such remains a topic only rarely addressed. And yet, in addition to the economic outcomes associated with migration, one should also address the ways in which certain groups can influence and determine how their peers and they themselves integrate into a foreign society.\(^10\) Those who form a mobile elite constitute an entirely different group within the existing community of migrants.

Although “well-integrated migrants can become ‘nearly one of us’ (but never completely so), whilst the ‘underserving’ are seen as ‘too different’, as an impediment and, indeed, at times, as a threat to a sustainable society,”\(^11\) the cases of mobile elites demonstrate another picture. Moreover, that picture is paradoxical. The protagonists of the current inquiry belonged to a group of Romanticist intellectuals, and as members of this group they shared more with one another than they did with their regular compatriots. In fact, it was the reality of political emigration that forced the nineteenth-century elites to acknowledge and later exploit regional political situations, searching for allies for themselves as individuals and for their groups.

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\(^8\) Dojnov, *Bulgarskoto natsionalno-osvoboditelno dvizhenie*, 159–76.

\(^9\) Brettell, “Theorizing migration in anthropology,” 164.

\(^10\) Elsner, “Does Emigration Benefit the Stayers?” 531–53.

The Bulgarian mobile elites often repeated the strategies adopted by their Polish, Hungarian, and even Romanian predecessors. The defeat of the Hungarian revolution and the fall of a short-lived Hungarian state in 1849 created a cohort of brilliantly educated individuals who chose the path of emigration.\textsuperscript{12} Pushed out of the Habsburg Empire, these individuals had to reconsider not only their relations with the former host state, but also their relations with fellow minorities and their strategies of accommodation.\textsuperscript{13} They had to become diplomats and mediators who negotiated with the elites of the states which hosted them. A complicated web of interconnections stretched from one cohort of emigrants to another. Hungarian emigrants became acquainted with the Romanian “fourty-eighters” and Polish emigrants in Paris. The Romanian exiled ideologists (including the future prime minister of the Danubian Principalities, Ion Brătianu), were later the ones to accept the Bulgarian emigrants into their state.

What unites all these outstanding individuals and their less prominent compatriots was the reality of their exile. The Polish community of outstanding “cultivators of culture” in Paris and its much less notable peers shared the same experiences, but they shared them differently. Mobile elites were a thin layer of the privileged (due to their education, social status etc.), holding power in accordance with elite theory.\textsuperscript{14} They were intellectual elites who happened to be in exile. Their social capital had greater significance than that of their regular compatriots. Most of them profited from their imperial background to some extent, preserving the connections they had gained in their respective empires (as was true in the case of Prince Adam Czartoryski, for instance). Yet they were shrewd enough to formulate their subsequent political stances in accordance with the general Romanticist trends. Their political Romanticism came from cultural Romanticism,\textsuperscript{15} which in its turn made them primarily European romanticist nationalists, whose approaches, if not possible state-building plans, did not differ significantly.

Emigrant elites, like regular migrants, use their connections as important sources of social capital consisting essentially of “social networks and the associated norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness.”\textsuperscript{16} Yet networks often

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{12} Tóth, “The Historian’s Scales,” 294–314.
\item \textsuperscript{13} Lengyel, \textit{A Magyar emigráció}, 138.
\item \textsuperscript{14} Bottomore, \textit{Elites and Society}, 25.
\item \textsuperscript{15} Isabella, \textit{Risorgimento in exile}, 92–99.
\item \textsuperscript{16} Putnam, “‘E Pluribus unum’: Diversity and Community in the Twenty-first Century,” 137.
\end{itemize}
transcend the bounds of local communities, becoming links that bind together different ideologists, who exchange ideas and aspire to win one another’s support or debate with one another. Through networks, the elites rely on social resources that are accessible through one’s direct or indirect ties. While social resources exert a significant effect on the attained statuses, they can also be transferable. It is through those resources that the emigrant elites managed to become a part of a nationalist Romanticist intellectual group and simultaneously remain within their smaller community, originating among the aspiring minorities. The public sphere they addressed, however, transcended that modest group.

“Public sphere initially emerged as a powerful counterweight to traditional forms of political authority, inserting itself between the private life of the family and the arcana imperii of the early modern state apparatus,” so the identities of the Bulgarian mobile elites can be analyzed through that connection. They were, on the one hand, private and confined to their own circle. On the other hand, they were or aspired to be part of a larger community of European intellectuals. Since “individuals become integrated in groups through processes of recurrent social interaction and communication,” emigrants’ publications facilitated cooperation. However, it was effective information exchange that made the works of the public actors and their organizational and unifying abilities operational. They exchanged information and created links between their community and that of their host states.

Before the Russian-Turkish War of 1877/78, cohorts of Bulgarian revolutionaries found shelters in neighboring Serbian and Romanian lands or opted for further destinations like Russia. The colonies they formed became outposts, where nation-building and state-building ideas were exchanged, conceived, and promoted. In a biographical note dedicated to Georgi Sava Rakovski, an ever-roaming emigrant, a revolutionary and a notable ideologist of Bulgarian liberation, Veselin Traykov stresses Rakovski’s unique position as a truly international revolutionary ideologist.

Like Rakovski, who became one of the minds behind a number of Bulgarian revolutionary societies, branching out in the Balkans, notable poet Hristo Botev was also one of the emigrant ideologists.

18 “Social resources are resources accessible through one’s direct and indirect ties.” See Lin, “Social Networks and Status Attainment,” 468.
19 Emden and Midgley, Beyond Habermas, 5.
21 Lyulyushev, Prosvetnoto delo na bulgarskata emigratsiya, 3–9.
involved in promoting his national cause. What unites these individuals, except for their causes, debated, but often shared, is their experience of migration and their elite statuses.

Ivan Vazov, acclaimed writer and an emigrant in his youth, a representative of a younger generation of the Bulgarian intellectuals, published a novel and a theatre play featuring a romanticized version of the events of his turbulent youth. As outcasts living on the banks of the Danube after the failed attempts to liberate their nation from the Ottoman Empire, the protagonists led miserable lives. In the beginning of his novel, Vazov notes, “Romania offered them hospitality, but a type of hospitality that an empty shore gives to sailors, tossed out by the storms, shattered and broken. They were in a society, yet they were in a desert.” Vazov’s accounts should be understood as a romanticized version of the events, much like many of the subsequent memoirs and descriptions of the lives of the propagandists of the Bulgarian revival. In his Memoirs of the Bulgarian Uprisings: Eyewitness’ Reports. 1870–1876, Zahari Stoyanov tells similar polished stories of noble fighters for freedom and the hardships they had to endure.

Even the revolutionaries who could hardly be considered ideologists left memoirs, in which they presented themselves as heroes fighting for the liberation of their respective nations. Panayot Hitov, for instance, started out as an outlaw in the Balkan Mountains only later to become one of the most prominent figures in the Bulgarian revolutionary movement. While Hitov was initially a hajduk and hardly an ideologist, the emigrant destinies of Hristo Botev, Lyuben Karavelov, or even the instigator of revolutions Georgi Rakovski did not differ significantly. During his exile in Romania, Botev shared space with the acclaimed national hero Vasil Levski, and lived in a windmill in the outskirts of Bucharest. Judging by the accounts of several of these public actors, one may wonder whether they can be considered “elites” and, if yes, how their identities can be fully defined.

The border between an ideologist and an outlaw is truly delicate, and arguably more delicate in the Bulgarian case than in any other. Romanticist elites as such represented a group of individuals who contributed to their national causes while forging or attempting to forge political cooperation, publishing

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24 Vazov, Nemili, nedragi, 23.
25 Stoyanov, Zapiski po bulgarskite vustaniya.
26 Hitov, Kak stanah haydutin, 327.
27 Constantinescu-Iaşi, Din activitatea lui Hristo Botev, 14.
their ideas, and spreading these ideas within and beyond their circles. In order to transmit a political statement, they needed to make it attractive and worthy of association both for their compatriots and for the agents in the host states. A “mobile elite” thus could not be a closed group. Mostly emigrant intellectuals tried to widen their club in a desperate search for support.28

While the earlier cases of the Polish emigrants are remarkably similar to their Bulgarian followers, they bear one significant difference.29 The Bulgarian intellectuals were almost all poor, of humble descent, and relatively unknown (initially) in the foreign circles, while the Polish elite included a number of rather famous, rich, or noble individuals. Hungarian post-1849 emigrants represented a similar pattern, although often featuring notable modest protagonists. Similarly, the Romanian exiles in Paris were overwhelming brilliantly educated and often rich noblemen.30 While in the long run, these social differences could easily be obscured by the strategy chosen by a given individual (the quantity and quality of publications and one’s active attempts to engage the public actors in the host state and the home state mattered), they initially posed obstacles for the career of a public actor. Lajos Kossuth was a “mere low-nobleman from Upper Hungary,” lacking the bright social standing of many of his peers,31 and he had to create a freedom-fighter reputation for himself rather than rely on the already existing financial and political power of his name or family. Many other Hungarian, Romanian, and Polish exiles, on the other hand, had the leverage that he lacked. Alexandru Golescu, for example, a rich Romanian noble and an emigrant in Paris, enjoyed a number of privileges derived from his status, which allowed him immediate entry into the higher circles of French social life.32 That was certainly not the case of Georgi Rakovski, who constantly had to struggle to win the recognition of the Russian, Serbian, or Romanian authorities.

Prominent nineteenth-century Bulgarian intellectuals had merchant or low-middle class backgrounds. Most of them had been educated in the Greek circles of the Ottoman Empire or in Russia.33 Many opted for schools based in the Danubian Principalities or chose the institutions offered by the Ottoman Empire to their newly-groomed elites. Some of them would later continue their pursuit

28 Isabella, Risorgimento in exile, 203–04.
29 The so-called Polish “Wielka Emigracja,” the Great Emigration of 1831–70, can be viewed as another example of an elite in exile. See Bade, Migration in European History, 134.
30 Jianu, A circle of friends, 115–27.
31 Deák, The lawful revolution, 7–10.
32 Jianu, A circle of friends, 94, 207.
33 Adzhenov, Svedeniia i zapisi za zhivot na Georgi Sava Rakovski, 19.
of knowledge in the West. Through the mixture of their Ottoman background, partially European education, local experiences, and connections to Western political ideals (including Kantian perceptions of a possible European world order) they reached fellow-intellectuals in Romania, Serbia, Russia, and Greece. Their destinies were not too different from the destinies of the intellectuals in the Habsburg or Russian Empires.\textsuperscript{34} Their orienteers lay in the West or in Russia. They wanted to belong to the circle of European intellectuals that encompassed foreign elites, yet they were not necessarily seen as such in their host societies. Nevertheless, the attempts of the Bulgarians to establish connections with the elites of their host states resembled the attempts of their Polish and Hungarian predecessors. They tried to engage the local agents who were either interested in their cause or shared some of their goals.\textsuperscript{35}

The Bulgarian emigrants longed for international connections. In a typography in Bucharest, Botev enjoyed the company of a Polish emigrant named Henryk Dembicki (who was the illustrator of a journal published by Botev), a Russian emigrant named Nechaev, and a number of Romanian socialists.\textsuperscript{36} Nevertheless, his Bulgarian identity was never in question. He, like many of his compatriots, believed himself to be a representative of the Bulgarian nation, of which he had a rather romanticized and dramatized idea. Yet his connections to a diverse circle of intellectuals he had met in Romania shaped his vision of the Balkans. In 1875, Botev, addressing the publications of the Serbian newspapers regarding a possibility of a Serbian-Bulgarian union, wrote that any such idea had to be based on “the freedom of nations, personal freedoms, and free labor.”\textsuperscript{37} He therefore linked progressive European ideals of the time to the destiny of his nation. He published abroad and phrased his statements with the intention of giving them universal appeal, understandable not only to his revolutionary compatriots, but to the Serbian and Romanian elites. Botev, therefore, reconciled his identity as a Bulgarian and a revolutionary with that of an emigrant and a Romantic poet.

Romanian exile became a leitmotiv in the memoirs, letters and publications of the Bulgarian emigrants that was destined to create links between the intellectuals of the two countries in the middle of the nineteenth century. In July 1868,

\textsuperscript{34} Buchen and Rolf, “Eliten und ihre imperialen Biographien,” 17–19.
\textsuperscript{35} For example, several Russian Slavophiles, including Ivan Aksakov, showed lively interest in Balkan affairs, although their vision was almost exclusively Russia-centered.
\textsuperscript{36} Constantinescu-Iaşi, \textit{Din activitatea lui Hristo Botev}, 16.
\textsuperscript{37} Botev, “Samorazumniyat i bratskiyat soyuz.”
Kazakovich, a Bulgarian from Alexandria, wrote to one of the most prominent Bulgarians in Bucharest, Ivan Kasabov, that Romania offered the Bulgarian youth every opportunity for education and that teacher Hristo Zlatovich had been granted rights by the authorities to educate the local Bulgarian children to “feel Bulgarian even if they were born in Romania.”

In 1869, in an article published in the newspaper Svoboda, Lyuben Karavelov called Romania “the Second Switzerland,” a sort of a bastion of liberty and culture. Overly idealistic federalist Karavelov certainly was not striving to give an adequate description of his host state. Rather, he sought to promote the links that could facilitate the accommodation of his fellow emigrants. His accounts were meant to explain to the local Bulgarian public that one could easily be Bulgarian in Romania. Moreover, he wished to convince them that both Romania and Bulgaria could benefit from the activities of the émigré communities in the long run.

The presence of the Bulgarian intellectuals in Romania brought not only the like-minded Romanian elites to them, as was true in the case of the connections between Rosetti and Botev. It also resulted in a number of coordinated publications that were intended to influence the mutual perceptions of the local public and the exiles. Such was the Buduchnost-Viitorul journal, published by Georgi Sava Rakovski. In an article published in 1864, he called Romania a “free and inviolable asylum,” where he could continue his political activities (although Rakovski’s whole destiny was marked by troubles caused by the authorities of the states in which he resided), remain Bulgarian, and become an internationally acknowledged intellectual, a multi-lingual regional agent, a prominent publicist, and a revolutionary.

It was a mixture of romanticism and mobility that made exiled elites exhibit a number of coexisting identities. “Exile” added flavor to a national cause, romanticizing it, while “emigration” was often associated with hardships and lack of acceptance. Mobile elites, paradoxically, embodied both. They were the people who often turned their “hardship” into romanticized banners to brandish in front of the public. They did not exhibit a singular identity, but encompassed several, often turning their rhetoric to the universal values of “progress and freedoms.” For example, Levski referred not simply to the “Bulgarian nation,” its interests, and displaced or mistreated Bulgarians, but rather to a “sacred and...

38 BIA [БИА] Fond № 154, arh. ed. 6, list 8.
39 The first issue of Karavelov’s journal Svoboda appeared in print in November 1869.
pure republic.” Universal romanticist values surpassed the standard agenda of being Bulgarian and appealed to wider audiences. The journals published by the emigrants often addressed the public in their host states (as was true in the case of Viitorul), tackling the issues that the Balkan nations might have in common. Highlighting shared burdens and goals rather than differences, the mobile elites created ideological links that could facilitate the acceptance of their compatriots by the foreign states. Furthermore, they mostly relied on their revolutionary networks to increase their influence on the foreign public.

**Mobile Elites and Their Networking Systems: People with a Thousand Voices**

As Deborah Rice points out, “[t]he original source of all social cohesion lies in interpersonal networks that emerge once two or more individuals perceive or experience a common ground between them.” The creation of that common ground and the avoidance of possible dangers was one of the key factors that determined the strategies adopted by the mobile elites. Too crude and active involvement, like in the case of Rakovski or Hitov, could create problems with the local authorities. Rakovski was convinced that foreign help was needed in order to create a viable Bulgarian nation-state in one form or another. His attempts to forge an alliance with the Greeks in 1840s and later in 1860s proved fruitless, as did his attempts to instigate a revolt in Brăila in 1841. The revolt was quickly put down by Prince Ghica, who valued peace with the Ottoman Empire more than he did friendly relations with the Bulgarian revolutionaries.

In the 1860s, Rakovski settled in Belgrade, where he once again attempted to find common goals with several prominent Serbian politicians. For a time, he managed to attract Michael Obrenovich to his cause. In Serbia, Rakovski started publishing his Danubian Swan, a journal aimed primarily at promoting the independence of the Bulgarian Exarchate from Constantinople and the emancipation of the Bulgarian nation.

A vast array of interconnections is reflected in numerous organizations established by Rakovski and his compatriots outside of Bulgaria. Rakovski’s attempts to coordinate revolutionary activities in

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41 A famous quote, taken from Levski’s letters to Svoloda, where it was published in 1871.
Serbia failed, and the legion that was supposed to liberate Bulgaria from the Ottomans was disbanded. Yet many of the volunteers assembled by Rakovski remained under the influence of his authority.

Most of these revolutionary networks relied on the tolerance of the local governments and the possibility of establishing a dialogue. In 1869, Dimitar Obshti invited Panayot Hitov to Brăila, assuring him that he did not have to worry about the local authorities, since they had connections with the local merchants. He wrote: “After having seen me, the merchants in Brăila asked about you, wondering why you would not come and what they can do to assist you.”48 In this case, personal connections turned into international connections that facilitated the intricacies of travel. The local merchants sustained personal or trade relations with the exiles. The emigrants promoted their political agendas and engaged their fellow revolutionaries with the help of the local intermediaries, whose ethnic backgrounds rarely mattered. Their ideological orientation played a more significant role.

Nevertheless, the attitudes of the emigrants could change quickly. Rakovski is only one of many examples of radically shifting opinions. He had initially regarded the Russian Empire as a savior of his nation, but within a decade he had changed his opinion dramatically.49 The emigrants living in Russia, on the other hand, had to adapt to the circumstances there, attempting to forge relations with prominent politicians and intellectuals whom they could attract to their side.

During his life in Russia, Lyuben Karavelov published a book consisting entirely of the dramatic tales about the lives of simple Bulgarians under the “Turkish yoke.”50 Written in Russian, the book first appeared in print in Moscow. While it is difficult to reflect on the volume’s overall popularity, the mere fact that it was published (with an optimistic dedication to the Russians who believed in common Slavic ideals and to whom Bulgarian lives mattered) offers testimony to the activities of a mobile intellectual, who attempted to forge connections with his peers in a host state.

The mobile elites persisted through communication, and this communication assured not only their success, but also opportunities for their peers to integrate. Karavelov hoped his book would be read by the Russian public, which would eventually feel compassion for his compatriots and the fate of his motherland. Similarly, the Bulgarian students in Petersburg wrote to Nikolay Ignatiev, a

49 Rakovski, Pereselenie v Rusiya, 1–2.
50 Karavelov, Stranici iz knigi strudanyi bolgarskogo plemeni, 1–3.
prominent Russian statesman and one of the architects of the favorable San-Stefano Treaty of 1878, asking for further assistance: “Your Excellency has justly drawn the borders of the San-Stefano Bulgaria, creating an ideal for the current and future generations of our nation.” The letter conveyed a message similar to that of Karavelov’s stories published in Russian. It was a hopeful acknowledgement of a connection, even if it might have been overstated, an attempt to gather support for a national cause. The Bulgarian students hoped to offer an example of Bulgarians in Russia, something that could attract public attention to their cause and influence the portrayal (preferably positively) of their compatriots in the Russian public sphere.

The important trait of emigrants in the eyes of their host societies is their deceiving “homogeneity.” The Polish romanticist emigrants (most prominently Chopin and Mickiewicz) made their nation a hit in France, much as Kossuth and Pulszky introduced the idea of a Hungarian nation to the West. Decades before, the protagonists of the Greek revival accomplished a similar goal for their nation, starting a wave of Philhellenism that enveloped all sides of European cultural life, including art and literature. What united these different people was their double status, i.e. that of an emigrant and that of a mobile intellectual. The Bulgarian elites had their share of successes as well, although on a smaller scale. The presence of the Bulgarian emigrants in Russia and the activities of the various Slavic societies inspired Ivan Turgenev to create a poem dedicated to the massacres in Bulgaria. Turgenev’s “Croquet at Windsor” was based on the aftermath of the April Uprising, while his famous novel On the Eve became a testimony to the stories of the Bulgarians living in Russia. On the Eve features a Bulgarian protagonist who was loosely modeled on a real emigrant, a student of Moscow State University. Migrants, intellectuals, and regular refugees provoked compassionate responses, which was precisely their intention.

Russian Slavophiles sought contact with the Balkan Slavs, and often their attempts were met eagerly by the Balkan public actors, including those residing in Russia. Furthermore, these mobile elites created symbolic capital for their compatriots, since a significant number of them were turned into national

51 GARF [ГАРФ] Fond 730, opis 1, ed. hr. 79.
52 Pulszky, Életem és korom, vol. 3, 188.
53 Roessel, Byron’s Shadow, 136–39.
54 Turgenev, Polnoe sobranie sochineniy i pisem, vol. 10, 292.
55 Ibid., vol. 12, 191.
heroes, praised by both their peers and future generations. Vasil Levski became the epitome of a freedom fighter, used and abused in Bulgarian politics up to the present day, much like Lajos Kossuth and a long list of other European national heroes.

Scrutinizing their lives, one may wonder what made precisely these individuals reference points for their fellow-intellectuals and followers. While there was certainly a vast array of different factors that contributed to an individual’s fame, including personal qualities and skills, mobility and a cohort of skillful chroniclers remained an important catalyst for the emergence subsequently of a reputation as a revolutionary. Zahari Stoyanov thoroughly documented the paths to Bulgarian liberation in his monumental work. Kossuth, for example, not only left volumes of writings in different languages himself, but also became a prominent figure in the memoirs of his peers. Vast informational networks united these intellectuals, turning some of them into chroniclers, others into heroes, and some into both. Thus, the methods they used to transmit information that could leave a lasting impact were rather straightforward. They presented themselves as truly transnational figures, although always highlighting their background, and they sought like-minded individuals in their host states with whom they attempted to engage (not always successfully). They tailored their ideas to the general Romanticist views and political trends of the epoch, and they actively published and spread the works of their compatriots and fellow revolutionaries. Thanks to their louder voices, they assumed the roles of “national representatives,” claiming to protect the interests of their fellow emigrants and their compatriots.

Mobile Elites and Their Political Impact: Failed Connections?

Empires often served as links that bound various public actors together: they offered career opportunities, regulated many aspects of their citizens’ lives, and, subsequently, assured a communication space that facilitated the exchange of ideas between various public figures. The emigrant revolutionaries in the Ottoman, Habsburg, and Russian Empires relied heavily on these imperial interconnections to curry support for their causes. Rakovski, Botev, and

57 Todorova, Bones of contention, 3–20.
58 Dénes, “Reinterpreting a ‘Founding Father','” 90–117.
59 Notably, Kossuth is prominently featured in Ferenc Pulszky’s hit-novel “My life and times.”
60 Brunnbauer, “Der Balkan als translokaler Raum,” 85.
Karavelov all actively engaged in publishing journals and brochures. They hoped to address a wider audience, though their circle was relatively narrow.

Lyuben Karavelov published his apologetic remarks regarding federative ideas, mostly with the intention of attracting his co-nationals and involving foreign public actors. Criticizing the Greeks’ “favorable” relations with the Ottoman Empire, he wrote in the journal *Svoboda*, “[i]t becomes clear that the South Slavs and Romanians are more despised by the Greeks than the Mohammedans. Therefore, the Greeks resemble Hungarians, who like them, wish to create vast and powerful states without people.”

Given the emigrants’ precarious relations even with their mobile fellows and local governments, their disappointed criticism of potential partners was justified. They sought connections, but their attempts to establish meaningful links failed more often than they succeeded.

The Bulgarian Secret Central Committee is one of the examples of a Bulgarian-Romanian collaborative effort that did not endure. The organization emerged in 1866 with several prominent Romanian liberals backing it. Subsequently, the prominent public actors of the organization forced Alexandru Ioan Cuza to abdicate, severely damaging Romanian relations with the Ottoman Empire. Following the events, Bulgarian elites living in Bucharest seemed resourceful allies to the Romanian liberals. Although Rakovski himself was not prone to cooperate with the liberals, another prominent emigrant, Ivan Kasabov, was eager to oblige. Kasabov hoped to further the outbreak of a Bulgarian revolt on Ottoman territory through the cooperative endeavor.

The “Holly Coalition,” which was the result of this temporary alliance, had to ensure a full-fledged Balkan uprising with the subsequent establishment of a Balkan federative state. The Romanian side seemed eager to forge contacts with the emigrant revolutionaries, offering them funds in return for their military support. While the Bulgarian emigrant leaders had to ensure the participation of their compatriots in the affair, they established connections with the leaders of the host state. However, the alliance was short-lived. Following the restoration of Ottoman-Romanian relations and the election of Charles Hohenzollern as a new Romanian sovereign, cooperation with the Bulgarian emigrants in support of their cause ceased to be profitable for the Romanian side.

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61 Karavelov, “Koeto iska chuzhdoto, toy izgubva i svoeto.”
Thus, most of the enterprises initiated by the Bulgarian mobile elites yielded little success. Nevertheless, after the emergence of the Bulgarian Principality, many of the emigrant’s ideas found new meaning in the policies of a newly-formed Bulgaria. In 1886, Prince Alexander Battenberg suggested a Romanian-Bulgarian alliance similar to the Austro-Hungarian Compromise, a union that represented a way of improving the political statuses of both nations, heavily based on the ideas expressed by the Bulgarian emigrants, who had once lived in Romania. Furthermore, in a letter to Alexandru Sturdza, Battenberg reflected on the “brotherly hospitality” granted the Bulgarian exiles in Romania, something the prince considered an important foundation for strengthening the connections between the two nations.

The emigrant elites offered solutions to the irredentist problems arising in Bulgaria and in their former host states. Nevertheless, most of their projects were either overly idealistic or were simply never really accomplished. With the appearance of the Bulgarian Principality, the former emigrants changed their goals and returned to Bulgaria. Some had accomplished careers in the new state (like Bulgaria’s distinguished prime minister, Stefan Stambolov), yet others perished before the signing of the treaty of Berlin (for instance Georgi Rakovski, Levski, and others). However, the patterns established by the mid-nineteenth-century emigrants persisted.

In 1902, a Bulgarian emigrant association from Macedonia in Ruse sent a letter to count Ignatiev. This time, a different cohort of emigrant elites was attempting to forge alliances and act as their group’s voices. These public actors not only adopted the strategies of their predecessors, the emigrants of the Bulgarian revival, but also relied on their experiences in addressing Ignatiev.

In their letter, the emigrants implored the count to come to their aid and use his influence to improve the position of all the Bulgarians:

Raise once again your powerful voice and proclaim that the Bulgarians from Macedonia and Odrin deserve support and political freedom, that the time has come for the sufferings of these slaves to end. The voices of these doomed ones make us mourn them, and we must meet with you, Your Grace, our dear and precious guest, with grief and sorrow.”

68 GARF [ГАРФ]. Fond 730, opis 1. Ed. hr. 74.
Among the multiple addresses sent to Ignatiev by the emigrants, there was a series of remarkable attempts to connect the causes and views of the emigrants with those of the statesman. The Bulgarian public actors would allude to a common Slavic sentiment and the shared legacy of Orthodoxy, and they also mentioned the Greek threat and the “chimerical idea of a Byzantine Empire” that allegedly haunted the Greek rivals of the Bulgarian nationalists.

One of the reasons emigrant elites tended to be vocal in promoting the national causes lies in their precarious position. They depended on the good will of the officials of the host states, and they were either welcomed or considered a dangerous element. Under these circumstances, the existence of the Bulgarian legions in Serbia, the flourishing cultural life of the Bulgarian emigrants in Odessa, their revolutionary networking in the Danubian Principalities, and even their pursuit of studies in Russia were always at risk. Careful navigation within the complicated web of social networking was necessary for the mobile elites. They searched for ways to promote their respective national causes, and they served as voices for their fellow emigrants, who, even unwillingly, were often associated with their loud and proud representatives. Often the consequences of their careless actions could be projected upon the whole group of migrants. The mobile ideologists were perceived not only as prominent public actors promoting the Romanticist cause of national emancipation, but also as “others.”

The balance between those two aspects depended on both the actions of the elites and the political circumstances in which they lived. Many of the former emigrants and their associates became genuinely important links between their respective group and the foreign powers. Stoyan Zaimov, a public figure and writer, is one such example. Decades after the Russian-Turkish War of 1877/78, Zaimov received a message from Petr Agatev, a Russian friend, who thanked him for his hospitality and guidance during his visit to Bulgaria, expressing his wish to popularize the cause of the “Tsar-liberator” committee in Russia. Agatev wrote, “I send you my sincere gratitude for the commemoration of the deeds and the preservation of the memory of our soldiers perished in Bulgaria.”

The connections established years before the Balkan Wars had their impact on the lasting relations between various factions, including the links between the local intellectuals.

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69 Ibid.
70 Drumev, Subhienia, vol. 2, 467.
71 CDIA [ЦДИА] Fond 1325 K, opis 1, arh. ed. 25.
Conclusion: Emigrants, Intellectuals, Visionaries?

Mobile elites represent a specific stratum of migrants that has the important function of mediating relations between their peers and the host states, influencing both simultaneously. Mobile elites target prominent public figures in their host states, engaging them in the creation of projects and plans that have the potential to reshape the political balance in a region. Mobile intellectuals get involved in local politics, while attempting to promote the agendas of their group. Furthermore, they attempt to bind their group’s wellbeing with that of the host state, assuring their group’s integration. When their activities are aimed at national liberation and similar causes, they promote peaceful existence and political unions with their host states.\(^\text{72}\)

While most of the mobile mid-nineteenth century agents can be regarded as typical political emigrants, they belonged to a much larger club of European intellectuals, sharing and discussing the ideas of Mazzini or Kossuth and receptive to the latest political trends not only in their respective region, but abroad. Their connections to the Western space of political ideas made them international figures, often with equal fame. However, they were not simply international intellectuals, but agents who were instrumental in accommodating their migrant peers, who were less vocal in foreign societies. While mobile intellectuals never ceased being emigrants, willingly or not, they represented the entire group of migrants. While this particularity often determined the actions of the elites, it also granted them a rare opportunity to speak as voices of their nation. Thus, they subsequently influenced their own societies by creating future reference points, such as memoirs and chronicles of their own actions and those of their fellow emigrants.

In 1868, Hristo Botev wrote,

...[i]f the whole of the Bulgarian nation rises, Serbia and Montenegro surpass their borders and the Bosnians and Herzegovinians put down their weapons before Andrassy’s second proclamation the (Eastern) question will be solved and the freedom of the Balkan peninsula will be assured. Isn't this the era we are entering now?\(^\text{73}\)

\(^{72}\) Case, “The Strange Politics of Federative Ideas in East-Central Europe,” 838.

\(^{73}\) Botev, Statii po politicheski i olshestveni vuprosi, 498.
His multiple publications addressed a diverse public. Botev targeted his fellow emigrants and people who might have shared his goals and beliefs in the foreign countries. He reflected on the destinies of the peoples of the Balkan peninsula, looking at the streets of Bucharest and attempting to define his own place in the state that hosted him and could become a worthy ally in the future. He was Bulgarian, yet he was a Romantic poet like his Romantic European counterparts, having more in common with Petőfi or Mickiewicz than with an uneducated peasant in the Balkan Mountains. He managed to walk on the edges of identities and to fit into two groups and influence not only Bulgarian literature and political thought, but also the societies in which he dwelled. While many emigrants failed (sometimes miserably) to achieve their immediate goals (uprisings, revolutions, etc.), they offer a keen researcher a pattern of accommodation that is seldom acknowledged. Their activities had impacts that transcended their own time and sent messages to future generations.

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