

BULGARIAN LITERATURE IN SEARCH OF THE MAN OF MODERN TIMES

REVIVAL DONATION AND THE CULTURAL CONSTRUCTION OF LIBERATED BULGARIA

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“Outside, above the door on a large and long panel, was a sign in capital white letters, Hr. G. Danov in Plovdiv, Ruschuk and Veles. Because I had not seen such a rich bookshop before, I was amazed by the many books arranged on the many shelves... Apart from the books, I marveled at the many study books, large and small maps, globes and planetaria, which I had not seen at school before... There were visitors from different places. Some were buying books, others were placing orders, still others were making corrections, and a fourth group came to see Mr. Danov... In a word, the bookshop looked like a ministry of education...” (Stoyanov 2010: 206-207). This is how the great Bulgarian educator Nikola Saranov presents the meaning of what he did in his memoirs, on the occasion of his visit to Danov’s bookstore in 1871.

There are moments that determine the fate of a nation for generations to come. There are events that mark whole epochs in the development of countries and remain deeply imprinted in our national memories. The commissioning of the first Bulgarian printing press in Plovdiv and the building of the first state university in Sofia are precisely such moments that move the Bulgarian nation forward in broad strides towards the values and practices of modern Europe.

We open our talk, dedicated to the *Revival donation and the construction of liberated Bulgaria*, in the house of the great Bulgarian visionary, philanthropist, patron and public figure **Hristo G. Danov** (1828-1911), because it is well known that it was here that the foundations of the Bulgarian book publishing were laid, giving impetus during the Revival to the formation of the new Bulgarian literature, which still managed to bring the Bulgarian nation into modern European values, despite the general slowdown of Bulgarian culture in the previous centuries, influenced by modern Europe. And thus Plovdiv became the cradle of enlightenment in the long centuries of Ottoman rule. It was through books that the New Bulgarian literary language and printed words began their development. In this way Hristo Gruev Danov became an enlightened figure for the entire Bulgarian people. Therefore, hosting this talk under the title of the Revival donation here is not accidental, because it is exactly what we think of when we talk about the cultural *construction of liberated Bulgaria* in Plovdiv. It is no coincidence that Lyuben Karavelov praises the Plovdiv ‘awakener’ with the following words: *“Danov’s name has long been heard throughout Bulgaria and his books are found everywhere where Bulgarians live.”* (Genchev 2007: 422).

In just a few years, Plovdiv established itself as a stable publishing centre. In 1861 Ivan Bogorov reports that 20 years ago a book was rarely found in Plovdiv, now (in 1861) there are four book shops, which “make earnings in that amount to several hundred thousand grosha [coins]”. He concludes that “Plovdiv today is to the Bulgarians as Paris is to the French in terms of enlightenment, and as Lipska [Leipzig] is to the Germans in terms of book trade”. (Genchev 2007: 421).

For the great Bulgarian ‘awakener’, the path to the integration of Bulgarians into modern European practices has two important elements, which are interdependent and mutually conditioned: teachers and textbooks, which he unequivocally emphasizes in his memories, and with his overall activity successfully defends this idea: “... *to first create good teachers, and then to publish textbooks and other books for reading. This led me to stop publishing textbooks for a while and to take up the agitation for training good teachers and for reforming the monitorial schools and monastery schools*” (Nikolova 2009: 203). Danov’s work is not at all small and it represents a special intellectual gift to the Bulgarian people, which marked a milestone in the spiritual growth of the nation; and this remains forever imprinted in our national cultural memory.

Pre-Revival donation

The Bulgarian Revival is a unique, singular and, to the highest degree, meaningful period, saturated with dynamic achievements in culture, science, social and economic relations. One of the phenomena of this period was the development of donation, which became the traditional way in which all cultural, spiritual, political, revolutionary and religious initiatives of Bulgarian society were financed. An important feature of Bulgarian donation in the Revival period was the longing for this activity to be carried out in the context of material opportunities for education and the awakening of Bulgarian spiritual culture (Pantev 2002: 11). This is particularly evident in the activities of the two brothers from Karlovo, Evlogi and Hristo Georgiev.

And if today we look back to that era and walk ‘*the path of Revival donation*’, we will realize that centuries after that era we never forgot their overall philanthropic efforts. Such is the place of our interactive tourist itinerary *Revival donation* designed to immerse visitors in the complex issues of modern donation culture.

With the theme thus outlined, it is no coincidence that donation ranks among the leading social attitudes driving the Bulgarian nation towards modern European values. There is undoubtedly a scholarly interest in the personalities and work of the Georgiev brothers. This is evidenced by the existence of numerous conferences under the patronage of the brothers from Karlovo, and in the literature there is a large number of sources on the role and place of donation in Bulgarian history; sources formed over the centuries, in which some of the most prominent representatives of the time contributed.

Especially for us, the Bulgarians, it should be noted that even in antiquity throughout the Bulgarian territories there was a vast charitable activity, which was expressed mainly in the maintenance of religious temples and the improvement of urban areas. (Dimitrov 2002: 13- 16; Lechev 1993: 7-16).

In purely linguistic perspective, the etymology of the Bulgarian lexeme “dar” [donation]¹ is derived from the Old Bulgarian “даръ”. In different types of dictionaries it is explained as “*given to someone as an expression of good feelings or as a sign of gratitude*” (Georgiev (ed.) 2007: 319) with the most frequently mentioned synonym “podarak” [gift] (Georgiev (ed.) 2007: 320). The lexeme itself appears relatively early in Bulgarian vocabulary. It could not be otherwise, considering the notable historical figures who left their mark in the Bulgarian donation tradition, among whom stand out the king-ktitors [donors] Simeon, Petar, Ivan Asen, Ivan Alexander, Shishmanovtzi, numerous documents testify to their work. Or, for example, saint Pimen Zograf, whose icons bring a special mysticism to the

¹ In his dictionary, Naiden Gerov defines the word as “*great concentration on something, on some work, diligence*”. (Gerov 1906: 76). By “donation”, Dechko Lechev understands “*a socially-conditioned phenomenon, of a national-psychological character, in which someone - (the donor) provides gratuitously (donates) - something (a donation), to someone (a ‘donatee’)*”. (Lechev 1993: 21).

dim interior of the Christian church², or the elder brother of the patron of the alma mater in Plovdiv, Hadzhi Valcho, or the thousands of pilgrims of the so-called “*harizani*” [givers] - Bulgarians who “*harizvat*” [donate or give] their labor and time to various church sites, whose number exceeds over the years. All of them provide invaluable help - from repair work in the monastery complexes to picking olives, fruit, and vegetables; each of them left their mark in the complex system of donation.

From the numerous records, we can conclude that donation in our lands has a long history, originating in the Middle Ages and reaching its greatest social significance during the Bulgarian National Revival, due to the favourable economic factors created.

The exhaustion of the issues of the Revival donation and the cultural building of a free Bulgaria is a complex task. The important thing in this case is the classification of the donation processes during the Revival and their reflections on the construction of post-liberation modern Bulgaria. And these can be specified through an appropriate scholarly curriculum, whose manifestations and intentions could rely on several fields of emphasis, which will be presented here in brief.

In this talk we will briefly introduce the main benefactors and donors who left their lasting mark in the memories of their contemporaries. These are the benefactors who recreate the spirit of the age in their stories, and the stories about them build a kind of literary pantheon and at the same time leave their own marks on it, because it is the written word that is the magic that perpetuates what is said and establishes their names. These are the names of people who stood at the center of public life at that time. (Nikolova 2009: 9-13). In this aspect, the question of what information the deeds of these good people give us about the construction and modernization of liberated Bulgaria is to be answered.

Biographical Highlights

It is generally accepted that the Bulgarian Revival is the era in which the Bulgarians established themselves as a modern national community, the foundation of which was the establishment of secular education and culture. The formation of a new type of intelligentsia and intellectual circles began in the 1820s and 1830s. The first features of Revival modernity seem to lead naturally to the manifestation of the Revival man - towards trade, markets, goods, production, which gradually give him the image of a modernizing citizen. (Getova 2009: 10). This process has its foundations in the emerging new socio-economic group - the bourgeoisie, among whose most prominent representatives are the two brothers Evlogi and Hristo Georgievi.

About the patriotic Bulgarians Lyuben Karavelov writes “*The first Bulgarians ... who took to boasting of their name and who admitted that they were born in Bulgarian lands were the late Hristo Georgiev, Kifalov, Dr. Seliminski, P. Sapunov and others*” (Karavelov 1873: 47). These words of the eminent publicist and public figure Lyuben Karavelov show the enormous role of the patriotic endeavor of some of the most prominent Bulgarian Revival figures.

While appreciating the importance of the biographical genre as a source for the construction of the image of Evlogi Georgiev, we are likely to encounter the objection that these praises, approved by the Communist party, are not among the most objective data about the overall activity of the brothers Hristo and Evlogi Georgiev. At the same time, however, it should be remembered that all praise is born in response to something they have done. Therefore, we can hardly assume that the evaluations that occur about them are devoid of objectivity, and it is for this reason that the speech of Ivan Evstatiev Geshov, read at the

² According to the biography of saint Pimen Zograf, he built “three hundred churches and fifteen monasteries in villages and towns”. In this case it is more admissible to assume that he renovated and renewed them with frescoes. (Petkanova 2001: 654-656).

ceremonial assembly of the Bulgarian Literary Society on December 12, 1899, will serve as the basis for the construction of the images of the Georgiev brothers (Geshov1928). The implementation of such a model regarding the documentary and archival heritage of a personality of the rank of Evlogi Georgiev is important for the future research of the life and work of a public figure with such significant contributions and recognition, by the mainly foreign cultural circles but with such a dramatic fate in our country.

Evlogi Georgiev Nedev was born on October 3, 1819 in Karlovo in the family of Georgi Nedev and Evdokia Pulieva. His childhood was unhappy - he soon became an orphan, as he lost his father when he was only nine years old. He studied in his hometown, where his teacher was the renowned Karlovo teacher Rayno Popovich³, and his classmates were Lyuben Karavelov and Gavril Krastevich. The bright boy distinguished himself early with special knowledge and after completing his education in Plovdiv, at the age of 17 he was invited by Raino Popovich to teach. It is immediately noticeable that the picture the biographer draws determines the perception of Evlogi in the idealized terms. Noteworthy is the celebration of the teaching profession as “*sacred*” and teachers as “*the most prominent priests*”. During Ivan Evstatiev Geshov’s speech he spares no superlatives by calling the elder of brothers from Karlovo “*one of the most generous benefactors of the current century*”. Evlogi is also called a “*great benefactor*” (Geshov 1928: 1-2).

It was not long before the young Evlogi realized that despite his noble mission, he was destined for a different path. After the death of his mother, who died of the plague in 1837, on February 19 of the same year, together with his uncle, Nikola Puliev, Evlogi left for Wallachia, where he was quarantined because of the plague epidemic spreading at that time. It was here that first Evlogi, and later Hristo, developed their entrepreneurship, perseverance and creative initiative. It should be specified that at the dawn of his industrial business Evlogi Georgiev was deliberately engaged in the export of Bulgarian goods and products, such as Karlovo ‘*gaytani*’ [woolen braids], ‘*abi*’ [undyed wool], leather, rice, silk, rose oil, etc. (Paskaleva 1996: 5). In this way, from the very beginning of his successful economic activity, Evlogi also supported his homeland.

Similar is the journey of Evlogi’s younger brother - **Hristo**, whom Evlogi tries to turn into a businessman as well⁴. He was born in 1824. Not long after his brother, he too left for the Danubian principalities, where there were better conditions for the development of their entrepreneurial activities together.

The high quality products for which the Bulgarian traders are famous are one of the factors that help them to become one of the biggest entrepreneurs in Wallachia. The natural development of their activity was reflected in the reorganisation of their trading company into a credit institution, from which the brothers made particularly large profits.

Donation initiatives in the pre-liberation period

Having become financially independent, born, raised and educated during the Bulgarian Revival, the brothers Evlogi and Hristo Georgiev remained faithful to its spirit and special patriotic pathos. It was from such motives that the two brothers began their active patronage. It is no coincidence that until the end of his life Hristo Georgiev carried in his heart his homeland and especially Karlovo (Statelova 1996: 39-45). It is no coincidence that for the rest of his life Hristo Georgiev carried his native country and especially Karlovo in his heart (Statelova 1996: 39-45). Of the two, it was he who travelled more frequently between the two sides of the Danube, while Evlogi settled in Galatz. Everywhere he went he promoted his Bulgarian origin, about which Lyuben Karavelov wrote (on the occasion of Hristo Georgiev’s

³ An important page of the Georgievs’ charitable activity is the assistance provided for the publication of the Revival textbook *Hristoiitiya (Manual of Good Behavior)* by Rayno Popovich.

⁴ He is so named in the research of Virginia Paskaleva. (Paskaleva 1996: 5).

death): “*The first Bulgarian merchant who started speaking Bulgarian and was not ashamed of his nationality was the late Hristo Georgiev.*” (Karavelov 1873a: 37).

In spite of the sudden death of the younger brother Hristo, the two brothers’ charitable activity was mainly continued by Evlogi Georgiev. The contribution of both brothers is expressed in several main directions formulated by prof. Nikolay Zhechev (Zhechev 1996: 52-53): “1. *Support of the Bulgarian book publishing, the Bulgarian Revival books and printing; 2. Financial support - partial or regular - of Bulgarian educational institutions and cultural establishments; 3. Moral and material encouragement of Bulgarian youth to obtain higher education in the country or abroad; 4. Support for political charities and other societies.*”

As soon as they settled in the Romanian lands, the brothers did not forget their homeland and began their donations “*for the benefit of the nation*”. It is evident from their subsequent actions that the Revivalist donors did not forget that the most powerful factors for the development and improvement of national memory and self-awareness were precisely religion and education. Seeing the multifaceted activity of the emigrant brothers, we marvel at their patriotic spirit, preserved in the memories of their contemporaries - *Mesetzoslov ili kalendar vechniy bolgarskiy* [Menologium or Eternal Bulgarian Calendar] by Hristodul Kostovich Sichan-Nikolov, *Zaradi vozrozhdenie novoy bolgarskoy slovesnosti ili nauki* [On the Formation of New Bulgarian Oral Tradition and Science], by Yuriy Venelin, *Tsarigradski Vestnik* [Constantinople Newspaper], *Dunavski lebed* [Danube Swan], *Balgarska pchela* [Bulgarian Bee], *Pravo* [Law], *Badashtnost* [Future], *Gorski patnik* [Forest Traveler], the magazine *Uchilishte* [School] are just some of the publications related to the names of the brothers Evlogi and Hristo Georgiev to support the Bulgarian literary production. It is precisely this dissemination of secular popular literature and press, “*the transformation of the book and the newspaper into an economic product*” (Getova 2009: 11) that marks the inclusion of Bulgarians in modern Europe, because this is how a system that values the prestige of knowledge, success, economic progress is formed, a system that in its strive does not turn its back on the native and tradition. Even before the Liberation, they donated funds to many schools in the country, as well as to women’s societies and hospitals.

The Georgiev brothers also have a great deal of credit for sending students abroad to graduate from the most prestigious European universities. This is also related to the idea that the two brothers expressed - that knowledge was a universal virtue during the Revival. Among the Bulgarians sent by the brothers are Ivan Bogorov, Todor Sahatchiev, Nikola Braykov and others. The Bulgarians who went to the educational establishments in the European educational centres had different educational and cultural backgrounds, but one common ambition - to acquire knowledge with which to support their homeland, to “*make Bulgarians first and Bulgaria afterwards*” (Mihova 2001: 117). They look into the culture of the ‘others’ and discover the new and different in the environment they find themselves in (Mihova 2001: 117). With this, several centres where Bulgarian pupils and students studied were formed during the era. The own-foreign relation had one main positive side - it opened up new and modern horizons for the emerging Bulgarian intelligentsia. Significant in this respect are Geshov's brief but eloquent words that the Georgiev brothers “*left a lasting mark on both banks of the Lower Danube, a shining trace in the history of our national revival*” (Geshov 1928: 2).

The very fact that even after the Liberation, the idea of the brothers Georgiev to continue their sponsorship for the enrichment and modernization of Bulgarian cultural and educational development is a sufficiently convincing evidence of their patriotic and selfless motives. And despite the unpleasant case of his disqualification as a member of the Second National Assembly, Evlogi carried his native homeland in his heart until the end of his days. He even furnished his home in Bucharest after the model of a wealthy house in Karlovo, and

in his message to his constituents he says: *“I am a native Bulgarian from Karlovo;.... I am a Bulgarian, and though I have been 43 years away from Bulgaria, I have always had Bulgarian sentiments, and so I shall continue to be, whether the National Assembly accepts me as a representative or not, I remain always with Bulgarian sentiments. This is all I have to say.”* (Geshov 1928: 2).

As donors of European magnitude

Of course, the two brothers' greatest contribution to Bulgaria happened after their death. The unsealing of their famous will, estimated to be worth approximately 23 million gold leva, sparked controversy and crises, a controversy that would linger around courtrooms for more than a decade. With their will, the Georgiev brothers found a way to be useful to society even after they ceased to physically exist. One can hardly doubt the patriotic motives of the brothers from Karlovo, who have invested their entire fortune in the development of the ideal called education, and in a way that excludes any kind of gains or greed. And after them there remain as sole heirs their selfless donations for nationally useful deeds, among which the Bulgarian Church in Bucharest, the University of Bucharest, the hospital in Bucharest, the municipality in Galati, a building for the construction of a Bulgarian school in Thessaloniki are only some of the donations mentioned in the will.

In the will the brothers do not forget their native Karlovo. Although they do not live in their hometown, they leave to their fellow citizens several buildings, which today are a vivid reminder of the generosity and selflessness of the true benefactors. A prominent example is the textile factory in the town. And to this we must add the sum of *“one hundred thousand leva in bonds.... which is to be deposited in the Ministry of Popular Enlightenment in Bulgaria, and the interest is to be sent to Karlovo for the maintenance of the above school.”* (The Inheritance..1907: 10).

The two brothers from Karlovo are not national freedom apostles, but their work will long continue to inspire people striving for progress and modernity, because history is about lasting universal deeds. To this day no Bulgarian has surpassed them in the amount of money donated for education, culture and education. (The Inheritance..1907: 13-14). It is in this context that they execute their will: *“My very hope that I may also share in the prosperity and greatness of my country makes me die in peace, for if I have worked all my life and have been saving, both I and my brother, we have been motivated only by this wish, which now remains to be carried out by my heir and the executor of my will.”* (The Inheritance..1907: 13-14).

And what more vivid proof than to establish a center of spiritual and cultural life in Bulgaria by donating 6 million leva for a university in Bulgaria. Founded in 1888, the first and only Higher School in the Principality of Bulgaria found its long-sought home:

“To allocate from the entire fortune 6 000 000 leva invested in bonds and real estate. The income therefrom is to be managed by a board of trustees: it is to establish and fund a higher school in a town in Bulgaria or Rumelia wherever it sees fit. This school is to be named “Brothers Evlogiy and Hristo Georgiev of Karlovo”. The board of trustees will place our portraits in the hall of the school, and in the grounds of the school it will erect two marble statues in our memory.” (The Inheritance..1907: 12).

It is noteworthy that later in the will the benefactor does not see the building merely as an investment to be made, but his purpose is clearly indicated: *“To send abroad young persons from Karlovo and from Macedonia so that they improve their education in some scientific field which the board will determine. These youths, after completing their education, should return to their homeland and should serve as professors for four years. The Bulgarian*

National Assembly will have the right to control the income of this fund” (The Inheritance..1907: 12).

Concerned about the fate of the proposed school, Evlogi instructs: *“In case Mr. Iv. Ev. Geshov would be unwilling or unable to accept this inheritance of mine, or in the event that he should die before me, then this inheritance, with all the responsibilities, rights and conditions set forth in this will, I leave to my cousin Evlogiy N. Pulev; but if he, too, should be unwilling or unable to accept it, I leave my inheritance, with all the responsibilities, rights, and conditions set forth in this will to Mr. Dimitr A. Ivanov.” (The Inheritance..1907: 13).*

The wishes of the two brothers have been fulfilled: *“they will place our portraits in the school’s gymnasium and erect two marble statues in our memory in the school’s grounds”,* which today adorn the front entrance of the Alma Mater to remind us that wealth only becomes wealth when it benefits the people.

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