

UTOPIAN BULGARIAS: LITERARY PROJECTS AND POLITICS
LITERATURE AND CONSPIRACY. PART 1:
THE DILEMMA OF THE MURDER OF PRINCE FERDINAND IN SVETOSLAV
MILAROV'S DIARY
LOGIC OF HESITATION

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The name of Svetoslav Milarov is almost completely unknown today. In this text, we will pay attention to his political diary, as it cost him his life. In it, turning to himself, Milarov analyzes his own split-mindedness.

His personality is extremely interesting and active. In literature, assessments about his personality and work are contradictory. The writer and publicist from the Bulgarian National Revival period Lyuben Karavelov called him a Turkish spy, a tool used by Hristo Arnaudov¹, who used him as a provocateur and then handed him over to the police. Zahari Stoyanov – author of the famous "Memoirs of the Bulgarian Uprisings" – repeated what Karavelov said. To the historian Stoyan Zaimov, Milarov is not a spy, rather an active participant in the Bulgarian revolutionary movement. Konstantin Ireček – a Czech historian and Bulgarian politician – noted Milarov's megalomaniac sentiments bordering with madness². To Dr. Krastev – the founder of the modernist Misal (Thought) circle – Milarov was a person with anarchist rebellion, painful sensitivity and complete inability to act (Krastev 1897: 97-98).

The life path of Svetoslav Milarov began on April 24, 1850 – when he was born in Istanbul in the family of Nikola Sapunov, who was known to have been a craftsman and participant in the fight for church independence. His education was connected to the French Catholic College in Istanbul, and then he went on to study as a scholarship student at the high school in Zagreb under the patronage of the Croatian bishop Joseph Strossmayer. He stopped attending school in the sixth grade to join the Second Bulgarian Legion – a formation training in Belgrade from 1867 to 1868 with the aim of raising a liberation uprising of the Bulgarians within the territory of the Ottoman Empire. The organization of such a legion was made possible with the diplomatic and financial support of Russia; the Bulgarian revolutionists were trained by officers from the Belgrade artillery school. With the change in Serbia's policy of conducting military preparations, the legion was disbanded and a large part of its participants transferred their activities to Romania. After the breakup of the legion, Svetoslav Milarov went to Bosnia with Metropolitan Dionysis. There he worked for some time as a teacher in the city of Bellina. After Bosnia, the young Svetoslav returned to Istanbul, where he joined the editing of the Macedonia newspaper together with Petko Slaveykov.

After the Turkish authorities discovered his letters of political content, Milarov was captured in Istanbul, arrested and sentenced to prison in Istanbul in 1870. There he wrote his drama in rhyme "The Fall of Istanbul", the article "Two Castes and the Two Authorities" with the assistance of P. R. Slaveykov, and the Macedonia newspaper was banned for publishing the latter. Two years later, Milarov managed to escape from the Istanbul prison and reached Odessa with the

¹ Hristo Arnaudov is a Bulgarian revolutionary, voivode (revolutionist leader) of the Internal Macedonian-Edirne Revolutionary Organization

² Compare the opinions of L. Karavelov, Z. Stoyanov, St. Zaimov, K. Irecek – in Aretov, 2013

help of the Russian Embassy. His experience was described in "Memories of the Istanbul Dungeons" (1881).

Milarov spoke several languages: in addition to Bulgarian and Turkish, he was also fluent in French, German, Greek and Serbo-Croatian.

In 1875, he returned to Zagreb to graduate high school and began studying law. During the April Uprising of 1876 he was in Braila and edited in the Vazrazhdane (Revival) newspaper. During the Russo-Turkish Liberation War he was a translator in the Second Army and fought in the battles at Pleven, later awarded the Order of St. Stanislav, III degree, for.

After the Liberation, he organized the return of the exiled Bulgarians. In addition to being a lawyer, he also worked as a journalist in the newspapers: "Maritsa" (Plovdiv), "Balgarskij Lev" ("Bulgarian Lion", Tarnovo, 1879), "Nezavisimost" ("Independence") and "Sofia" (Sofia, 1881). He created the Klepalo ("Doorbell") newspaper, where he wrote satire, feuilletons and essays. Svetoslav Milarov was also engaged in teaching in this period. He was also actively involved in political life and fought for / defended his political interests, and became a member of the Liberal Party.

With the coming to power of Stefan Stambolov after the Unification of Bulgaria (1885), Milarov was arrested, but managed to escape and toured Serbia, Romania and Russia for three years. He joined the fight against the Stambolov's Regime together with the Bulgarian expatriates in Bucharest and cooperated with the "Devetij Avgust" ("Ninth of August") newspaper while also publishing the "Devetnajstij fevruari" ("Nineteen of February") newspaper. In the late 1880s he emigrated to Odessa, where the assassination of Prince Ferdinand and Prime Minister Stefan Stambolov was plotted, keeping a detailed political diary all the time.

He was allowed to return to Bulgaria in April 1889, a year after the amnesty announced. Svetoslav Milarov, together with his like-minded people, on several occasions managed to track down Prince Ferdinand, but never fired, and soon even gave up all the plot. Almost immediately, the writer was interned to Karnobat, where he wrote his philosophical poem "The Heavenly Coup" – and it remains uncomplete.

On March 15, 1891, several co-plotters who had nothing to do with Milarov organized an assassination attempt on Stefan Stambolov. This happened near the City Garden, where instead of Stambolov the bullets hit the then Minister of Finance Hristo Belchev. This event naturally contributed to the prime minister's fury and he personally undertook the investigation.

In May of the same year, after Alexander Penkov from Sliven reported to the District Chief there is a of an assassination plot against Stambolov, a lawsuit was filed against Svetoslav Milarov and a preliminary search was carried out at his home. Police found several compromising letters tracing down to a plan for the assassination of Prince Ferdinand. The most interesting document, however, remained the political diary Milarov wrote in the winter of 1889. In it, the court found information about the meetings organized, of the participants who took the oath in the name of Bulgaria, they were willing to sacrifice their *lives and everything kind and dear in this world in order to remove from this world Ferdinand of Koburg, or the one who would inherit him, and that in order to achieve this goal we are entrusted unconditionally to Svetoslav Milarov, whom we choose as our leader*³...

61 journal papers survived – they tracked the events at the time of the plot from January 25 to February 18, 1889. It is known the last pages of the diary were torn off, but it is not known

³ Milarov, S. "The trial against Svetosla Milarov" (Milarov 2003: 103)

who by. It is also known Svetoslav Milarov entrusted the diary to a comrade, in case he was killed, to give it to his mother.

After the start of the trial, Milarov was called to plead guilty on three counts: he had an agreement with the Russian government; to assassinate Prince Ferdinand and, finally, in possessing and providing armaments and incitement to unrests in the state structure and for killing other of his fellow citizens. The defendant denied any wrongdoing under all paragraphs. His lawyer Dr. K. Pomyanov called the court to recognize the innocence of Svetoslav Milarov, arguing the latter is not a criminal, he was "*a patriot, an idealist, a fantasist*"⁴.

Despite the efforts of the accused and his defender, Svetoslav Milarov was sentenced to death by hanging. On July 15, 1892, in the courtyard of the Black Mosque (today The Seven Apostles church) Milarov was hanged along with three others. He was one of the first authors/publicists in new Bulgaria to be sentenced to death for a writing⁵.

In the first pages of his political diary, Milarov recounted what had happened before the journal began. From them, we get an idea of the author's previous diaries, one of which is precisely after his escape from the Istanbul Dungeon – an important moment in his life path, he would tell about in his "*Memories of the Istanbul Dungeons*", published in 1881. In the beginning, the image of Lapcho, an alter ego of Milarov himself, was introduced. Such an address to himself resembled a philosophical reflection in the spirit of Ancient Greek diatribe – dialogue with an imaginary opponent realized in street conditions. The diary is a form of interiorization the audience has fallen away from. The narrator admitted he had succumbed to villainy and anguish in recent years, and he was prone to conspiracy. From the very beginning, Milarov was against the royal authority, namely Alexander Battenberg. He shared the fierce struggle he was fighting against the politics led by the prince and his heirs/successors.

It is extremely important the author of the journal was not characterized as an executioner, but predominantly as a victim: "*Here are all the benefits of your work, Lapcho, and I fully approve of your decision to sacrifice yourself*" (Op. cit. 76).

However, he never approached it with malice or treachery. Fearless and devoted to others, his purpose was to sacrifice for the mission, a kind of patriotism and intolerance to the external successor (contradictory to the fact he was an irreparable Russophile). Svetoslav Milarov justified his hatred of the enemy precisely because he denounced his meanness and insidiousness. However, as we could trace, it he would write he did not know how to despise. Without stating it directly, the storyteller divided himself into a person in politics and a personality in his own. Milarov was an active participant in public life, a supporter of an idea he pursued absolutely. After all, this is an idea, but one that hasn't fulfilled his entire existence. Above all, he remained a man with weaknesses, but here we understand he was a person unstable, prone to hesitation, and this can also give us a hint of his inability to take any evil act. After all, we can't deny the ease he talked about himself with.

Next, he would share about his dedication to Bulgaria, he had risked and was willing to sacrifice himself for. Then it was about making bombs to assassinate Prince Ferdinand, and this was the beginning of the narrative of the imaginary assassination of the Crown. "*The diary was written in such a way that the outline description of Milarov – as a political person, who had been fully conveyed to the idea of a radical state change, to restoring the political situation of our fatherland 10 years back from the path of its natural self-development*"⁶. It is in the sequence of

⁴ Milarov, S. "From the speech of Dr. K. Pomyanov – defender of Svetoslav Milarov" (Milarov 2003: 106)

⁵ Milarov, S. "Svetoslav Milarov – the righteous conspirator". Op. cit., pp. 9-11

⁶ Milarov, S. "The trial against Svetoslav Milarov", Op. cit., pp. 101.

descriptions of the progress of the work the real person of Svetoslav Milarov was visible. The author experienced fatigue from light-mindedness and from communicating with people as these do not make sense, and he wandered and failed to get firmly on an idea: "*More often than not, I should be on my own and think of tribulation*" (Op. cit., p. 38)

In this reasoning of his, he showed the need for existential solitude, penetration in the soul, lost amid the chaos of society, weary of persecution of ideas. We also clearly see the need to reflect on what was conceived, the consequences. It was in the dialogues with Lapcho we realize the depth of what was happening in Milarov's soul. To him, the thought of suicide was more real than the murder. Lapcho had no fear of his own death. Svetoslav Milarov admitted his tendency to suicidal thoughts, but not heroically, rather cowardly, marked by an unacknowledged, hidden sense of universal mental loneliness. "*In any case, you are sure, that is, you can be sure they will not hang you, that is, you will not let it come that far*" (Op. cit., p. 10). These words sound like a self-fulfilling prophecy, since we know the real/true fate of the author.

Dr. Kr. Krastev's remarkable psychological portrait shares the same impression of the words (verbiage) and confessions of Svetoslav Milarov. "*The biggest question was he, in his nature, capable of such act, or was it just one of those infatuations, those self-deceits that make perfect characters, thirsty to accomplish their bland, to sacrifice their soul, their lives, convinced this sacrifice is now sufficient to exalt the world as it exalts them.*" (Krastev 1897:98) The critic thinks of Milarov's diary not as a political one, rather as a confession of a human soul. To him, this was not a statement of the deeds of a politician, but a mental picture of a poet capable of relentless self-analysis. Krastyo Krastev noted the cruelty the writer was capable of to himself, intricately bound by his high self-esteem. We must admit – Milarov did not lack pride, but the best places, the critic says, were precisely the images of hesitation, and anguish that tormented the poet's soul. "*We do not know if there is a second such example in history: sentence to death for plots carried out on a book...*" (Op. cit., p. 38) is one of the supporting points in Krastev's reasoning. Using psychological analysis, he sought precisely to prove the inability of Svetoslav Milarov to assassinate or murder. The indictment of the case against him said Lapcho was the material/tangible side of Milarov, drawing him to similar purposes, and just as Kr. Krastev would correctly note, the imagined Lapcho was nothing else but the Svetoslav Milarov's true nature, his real side, under the aim of the Mind and Reasoning, whose purpose was to convince Lapcho of the righteousness of murder. In Lapcho, it is the childish, innocent nature in Milarov revealed, he was unable to kill even a fly, everything related to violence was repulsive to him, and the brain-mind was precisely the ratio, exposing the cold logic of the desire for such a murder. In the reason, we see the denial of life, the maturity the author tried to escape from, as well as the contradictory morality obliging a person to sacrifice themselves for the good of society.

The reality was precisely this – soon after abandoning both the diary and the idea of conspiracy in committing a murder, Svetoslav Milarov fell victim to the sad consequences surrounding the murder of the Minister of Finance Hristo Belchev, who was wrongly taken for Stambolov, and Milarov had nothing to do with this act, yet the tangible evidence in the form of the Diary and some letters were present and the writer was hung. Kr. Krastev would compare this historical moment to the hanging of Bulgaria's greatest national hero Vasil Levski, and would even the significance of these two events, thereby denouncing Bulgaria of his present day, as 19 years after the Turkish authorities sentenced Levski would do the same to a poet similar in his ideals to Levski. The critic did not hide his disappointment, his sorrow at the loss of a life taken unfairly. In his last days, during the trial, Milarov would share he already felt his diary distant, he was surrounded in fog, and this could only prove to us even more the revelation of this erratic man,

who felt completely distant from that self, who wrote these fateful pages: *"That is all I know from the diary: my inner peace and character is clearly depicted, and if so, I am not ashamed to go out with it in front of the whole world, and that it is my best defense"* (Milarov 2003: 108).

In the still unstable pantheon of the Bulgarian heroes Krastev would also place Milarov next to Hristo Botev to outline the two poles of sacrifice:

Hristo Botev and Svetoslav Milarov are the two extreme poles in the previous development of the Bulgarian spirit. One is masculine, almost harsh in nature, extremely impulsive and supremely active in nature, where every word is a work; the other one – a feminine, tender to painful nature, all the greatness of which lies in the glam and the power of the feelings filled and devoured all his existence. (Krastev 1897: 97)

What Hristo Botev and Svetoslav Milarov's personalities had in common was rooted in anarchist sensitivities. Anarchism was the raw material of modern sacrifice. In fact, this text was much more than a diary, it was a document about the relation between political and private, as well as the change of premodern ethics with a new type of writing based on auto-reflexivity.

A number of Krastev's texts were dedicated to Ferdinand. After the murder of Stambolov, the prince was in absolute self-governance. An important focus of Krastev's analysis was the sight of Ferdinand as a guest in the Bulgarian palace⁷. Years later, a song of the modern band Upsurt would speak about the reign of Prince Ferdinand's dynastic descendant – Simeon II: *"Why is a guest ruling me???"* (Pop folk 2003)

In Krastev's texts one can capture the shadow of a high concept of the monarchical idea as incompatible to Bulgarian history. Monarchism is an acceptable form of government only if the ruler is the son of the Roman emperor philosopher Marcus Aurelius. Very interesting is the fixation in the image of Marcus Aurelius from the time of the early Bulgarian modernism (see Danova 2018: 52-68).

In this sense, Milarov's diary showed the conspiracy against the Crown was a product of both an anarchist imagination and a total inability to act. This rift between words and actions turned Svetoslav Milarov into a tragic person who still – despite the martyrdom efforts of Dr. Krastev and, in more recent times, of the editor Petar Velichkov – was outside the "narrow pantheon"⁸ of Bulgarian heroes.

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⁷ See the book with the published works by Dr. K. Krastev "The Misfortunes of Bulgaria" (Krastev 2016)

⁸ The thesis about the narrow pantheon belongs to Maria Todorova. See Todorova 2009: 405

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