

**Modern History Sourcebook:  
Zachary Stoyanoff:  
The Stara Zagora Uprising, 1875**

**From: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1876starazagora.html>**

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It was not yet dusk when we left the thicket and started towards Nova Mahala, about half an hour's walk. Before entering the village we sent two scouts (one of whom was Stamboloff) to make sure that no treachery was intended. They were to whistle three times if there was anything wrong, but only once if all was well. A few minutes after their departure we heard a single whistle, and we entered the village singing the revolutionary hymn, which had been forgotten since the previous evening. The whole village came out to meet us, accompanied by the dogs, who barked as if we had revolted against them. We were taken to a threshing-ground where supper really had been provided for us. Here we planted our banner and sat down to food, being waited on most assiduously by bare-headed peasants, with candles in their hands, who one by one kissed our banner with deepest reverence. The village pope explained to his flock what was the significance of our black kalpaks, which he called Russian, and why our flag was embroidered with a lion and not any other animal. Another old peasant, sixty or seventy years of age, who had lived long in Greece and taken part in revolutions there, continued to declaim during the whole of our meal Greek poetry, in which the word "patrida" recurred very frequently. He was full of enthusiasm, as were all those present, so long as it was merely a question of welcoming and complimenting us. The moment we mentioned the forty men they had promised us to assist in setting fire to Stara Zagora, the pope slunk out at the doorway, and the old peasant who had recited the poetry disappeared; the faces of our hosts lost their joyful look, and groups of twos and threes began to form; whatever: firstly, because their village would remain defenseless, surrounded by Turkish villages; and, secondly, because we should not get a single man from any other village.

Meanwhile, we learned that the Turks of Stara Zagora were all armed and on the alert, and that the town was surrounded by a strong patrol, which allowed no Bulgarian to pass either in or out. Villages who had arrived from Hain reported that all was quiet there, and had no knowledge of Dedo Nikola, our terrible *voivode*, the leader of seven hundred rebels. Again despair reigned in our ranks, and also among the villagers, who were evidently on the point of asking us to be gone. Mikhail Jekoff, whom I have already described as one of the most resolute of our party, and who had sacrificed all he had in the world to our cause, lost consciousness and fell fainting to the ground. We determined to make for Hain, and if we really found that Dedo Nikola had done nothing, to try and reach Tirnovo, which we were convinced had long since shaken off the Turkish yoke. Jekoff, who was unable to walk, was hoisted on a horse which we took from the village.

About an hour and a half after sunset we left Nova Mahala, not with songs as we had entered it, but in utter despair. We gave out at first that we were returning to Stara

Zagora, but when we were out of sight of the village we took the path towards the Hain pass. The rest of the band, who had not known of our decision, were much dissatisfied, many saying that they preferred to die in their native town to wandering thus aimlessly from village to village. They were quite right, for it was easy to guess that no revolt had taken place either at Zagora or anywhere else.... Meanwhile, from every side news came of the wholesale arrests which the Turks were making. At Stara Zagora the number of prisoners was variously stated at from a thousand to five thousand. Most of these were eventually released, but numbers of those who remained in prison were hanged the following spring, when the April rebellion broke out. The brothers Jekoff, whom we had left at Elkhovo, were destined to perish there. When their presence became known to the authorities---probably through treachery---they concealed themselves in a well, but upon the Turks surrounding their hiding-place Mikhail Jekoff first shot his brother dead and then blew out his own brains, rather than fall into the hands of their enemies.

Such was the inglorious end of the Stara Zagora insurrection, not a shot being fired by the insurgents either in that town or in any other of the revolutionary centres, from which such ready boasts of resolution had been made previously....

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**Source:**

From: Zachary Stoyanoff, *Pages From The Autobiography of a Bulgarian Insurgent*, trans. M. W. Potter, (London: Edward Arnold, 1913), pp. 54-61; reprinted in: Alfred J. Bannan and Achilles Edelenyi, eds., *Documentary History of Eastern Europe*, (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1970), pp. 189-191.

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