

April 3rd, 1860. Constantinople (Tzarigrad)
St. Stefan, Bulgarian Church

“On Holy Saturday, late in the night, the lengthy Easter service was nearing to its end, the sublime moment: the joyful announcement of the Resurrection. The parishioners waited in thrill and exultation the coming of the ritual moment. Even if they would see Jesus Christ in person to ascend to the heaven, the worshippers wouldn’t absorb that miracle as they were expecting another miracle: their national revival. And THE moment came: the deacon sang the Easter hymn “Elitzi vo Christa krestistesia” (*For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ*) and started the traditional litany to the Patriarch “The most blessed Kyril...” But strong voices echoed from the church and, according to the newspaper report by *Bulgarski Knishitzi*, put an end to the litany: “Stop, stop!” they shouted.

The deacon stopped the litany with affected astonishment. “We don’t want Greek Patriarch!” – voices were crying in chorus. Gradually the entire church joined. Three-four minutes more and more lauder voices filled the church: “*Nekemo grychky patrik! Ne sakame go!*”

Suddenly the church looked like a Convent that aimed to overthrow a king...

“Do we all agree?” asked the leading figures.

“We agree, we agree!” continued to shout repetitively the chorus. It was imminent for the Hilarion to mention the name of Kyril as a head of the Church of which diocese Bishop Makariopolski himself was part. Everyone watched in thrill and excitement his reaction to the provocation, will he accept the ancient Bulgarian patriarchal crown offered to him by the crowd! Hilarion, a huge man, “superhuman” in height, after one of his contemporaries, with a powerful, impressive voice, man of born dignity and internal force, suddenly stood at the place that the History reserved for him and said: “And all the episcopate of the Orthodoxy!” Everyone sighed with relief. He pronounced the sacramental formula, reserved only for a cleric who has no church authority above him.”

***Excerpt from “Bulgarian Easter or the Bulgarian passions”,
by Toncho Shetchev***