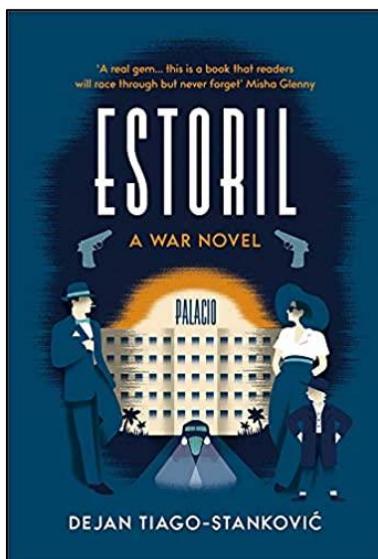


Book Review - “ESTORIL”

By Dejan Tiago Stanković

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By N. L. Taylor



Code name “Tricycle”¹

Estoril, the Grand Hotel, Spies, Ex-Kings, Refugees, 1940.... and the story of a small Jewish boy.... we are told, on the front cover of the book, written by Dejan Tiago Stanković and first published in English in 2018. For those of you who are familiar with what life was all about in Portugal, just before, during, and after WWII, the book is very much a *roman-à-clef*. Many places – including the Exhibition of the

¹ The explanation of the code name “Tricycle” can be found in ESTORIL, on p. 94.

Portuguese Empire² – and characters are easily recognisable, however, for those who were not in Portugal or who have not read books on the subject, ESTORIL is an easy and pleasant read that holds a number of intriguing surprises.^{3,4}

First of all, a bit of background information. The author, Dejan Tiago Stanković, is a literary translator born in Belgrade, ex-Yugoslavia. A naturalised Portuguese, he was the first to translate Saramago into Serbo-Croat, as well as Ivo Andric into Portuguese. He uses his in-depth knowledge of his own country and of the Balkans to give us insight into aspects of the conflict during WWII (outlining the horrors that were to follow) with which we may not all be so familiar. The loss of his country is truly heart-felt in the pages of his book.

Secondly, he treats the main character, Popov, as a brother – a man with incommensurable Slav charm, a man with great panache. Not surprisingly, Popov is said to be one of Ian Fleming's primary inspirations for the character of James Bond and the Casino in Estoril,



James Bond (Daniel Craig) in *Casino Royale*, 2006

the setting for *Casino Royale* (1952). But “*A word of warning: there is something cold, something cruel about his eyes*”, we are told as the book unfolds.⁵

² ESTORIL, p. 94.

³ ESTORIL, p. 291. “What about the railways? (...) We're particularly interested in food and tungsten ore being exported ...”

⁴ ESTORIL, p. 115 – “The Portuguese military is armed with German weapons and their aviation is obsolete. As for Prime Minister Salazar, he's clever (...), and what's Franco like? (...)”.

⁵ ESTORIL, p. 83 and p. 126.

Indeed, Ian Fleming – an awkward Rowan-Atkinson-blunderer type real-life secret agent in the book⁶ – is but one of the famous names to appear in the story, along with Antoine de St Exupéry, Milos Crnjanski, Ivo Andric, Michael Curtiz, Alexander Alexandrovich Alekhine and others (whom Stankovic does not always specifically name to avoid any legal unpleasantness) but whose works or whose biographical details usually enable us to guess who is hiding behind a first name or an alias.



Ian Fleming, c. 1950

Thirdly, *Spy/Counterspy*, Popov's own autobiography published in 1974 – along with this book, ESTORIL – makes life on the Gold Coast (*a Linha*, as we know it today) all seem as light and as bubbly as champagne. Stanković puts the following words in the mouth of Cardoso, the Head of the PIDE for the Estoril district⁷, raising his glass on V-Day.

“To peace said Cardoso. Wholehearted congratulations for winning the war, but let me tell you, the real winners here are us Portuguese. We survived the war without spilling a drop of blood”.

Not true, for of course and we have a hint that everything was not as smooth and straightforward and nice as it seems that when Rodriguez, Black's chauffeur “disappears” into the jails of the PIDE⁸, to turn up nine months later at the Hotel Palácio, a silent, broken man.

⁶ ESTORIL, p. 224.

⁷ Free Wikipedia – The PIDE, created in 1945, the International and State Defence Police was a Portuguese security agency that existed during the Estado Novo regime of António de Oliveira Salazar. Formally, the main roles of the PIDE were border, immigration and emigration control, and internal and external State security.

⁸ ESTORIL, pp. 151-156.

But who was the true-life Popov? Dušan "Duško" Popov, (10 July 1912 – 10 August 1981) was a Serbian triple agent who worked for MI6 and the Abwehr⁹ during WWII, as well as being an agent for the Yugoslav government-in-exile in London. A lawyer by training, he infiltrated the Abwehr in 1940 and fed the Germans inaccurate information supplied by the English in Portugal, for which he was awarded an OBE at the Savoy Hotel after the war.



Dušan Popov, c. 1940

Last, but not least, what are particularly fun to read are the descriptions and details of life in the Hotel Palácio itself during these troubled times – often seen through the eyes of a little Jewish refugee who arrives on his own in Portugal with a visa stamped by Dr Aristides de Sousa Mendes in Bordeaux, who is adopted by the Hotel General Manager, Mr Black and his Staff before the war comes to an end.

“Everybody comes to Black’s. You forget that this is Portugal. It is not Germany, England, or France Gentlemen. (...) for better or for worse, it is P-O-R-T-U-G-A-L. Portugal is the land of the Portuguese and we may have our faults, but one thing is certain: we don’t like war and we don’t like trouble. Some people think war is normal, but we, you see, give ourselves the right not to share that opinion. Some people even say that we are cowards. So what, even if we are!! Better a live coward than a dead hero, right?” says Cardoso.¹⁰ *“The Portuguese are not particularly fond of politics, that most dangerous of topics. They are gentle, dutiful people (...)”*¹¹

⁹ ESTORIL, p. 318 – Admiral Canaris, Head of the Abwehr, was Popov's handler's boss.

¹⁰ ESTORIL, p. 199.

¹¹ ESTORIL, p. 308 “(...) their submissiveness comes from long years of oppression stretching from the Inquisition to Salazarism (...)”.



The Hotel Palácio, Estoril, c. 1940

On 3rd May, 1945, Cardoso insisted – orders of the Council of Ministers he says – that the flag on the flag-pole at the Palácio Hotel in Estoril be flown at half-mast and three days mourning be observed” for Hitler's death. ... “*All neutral countries have done it, he says, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ireland. Even the Vatican*”.¹²

A few days later, meeting up again at the Première of the film *Casablanca*, Cardoso says to Black: “*The heroes of the film, you see, they flew to Lisbon... And I am sure that they stayed at your Hotel, Mr Black*”. “*If there were any vacancies*”, replied, Mr Black. “*Only if they could pay, agreed Mr. Cardoso*”.

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N. L. Taylor was born in the U.K., grew up in the Middle East, studied in Switzerland, and has worked on big events worldwide before retiring in Portugal. She has a passion for History and Intercultural Relations and has contributed various articles which have been published on the website of the British Historical Society.

¹² ESTORIL, pp. 349-350. “Portugal is an old and serious state. We preserved peace and dignity and maintained our neutrality all through the war. It wouldn't be nice if at the last moment we ran over to the winning side. You must admit, it wouldn't speak well of us, would it?” says Cardoso.