

БЪЛГАРСКА АКАДЕМИЯ НА НАУКИТЕ ИНСТИТУТ ЗА ИСТОРИЧЕСКИ ИЗСЛЕДВАНИЯ	
Историческа наука	211 к
Входен № 17	Дата 08.01.2020
София: 1113, булевард "9 септември", кв. 159, стр. 17 Тел.: 02/ 974 21 11; факс: 02/ 975 21 91	

OPINION

by Assoc. Prof. Aleksandar Grebenarov, PhD,

about the thesis of Assoc. Prof. Rumen Vasilev Karaganev, PhD,
on the topic „International Danube Commission and Bulgaria 1919–1940
(continued until 1944)” presented for the degree of Doctor of Sciences in the
field of 2. ”Humanitarian Studies”, professional field 2.2. ”History and
Archeology”, scientific specialty „History of Bulgaria”, code 05.03.06.

The dissertation study of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Karaganev reveals important moments from the history of the International Danube Commission (IDC), which was founded and operated after the First World War. The lack of comprehensive knowledge of the construction of this important interstate body and the problems surrounding its functioning is a deficiency that the research undoubtedly fills.

Contributing moments of the study stands out in several directions. First of all, it is possible to emphasize the comprehensiveness of the topic, which is its important merit. There are not many instances where the researched object is considered from the beginning of its existence to its actual end. In this way the notion of the subject – in this case the IDC – is more complete and accurate.

In the first part of the exposition, after the first so-called IDC's acquaintance meeting, Assoc. Prof. Karaganev presents with many arguments the realities in the international relations related to the aspiration of the victorious states to legitimize their dominance in this sphere of the order of Europe established at the Paris Peace Conference a century ago. The analyses included for the paramount role of the Paris-peacekeepers France, England and Italy in the establishment and operation of the commission, despite the fact that the river does not pass through their territory, show the aforementioned trend.

The research also shows a different nuance in the participation in IDC of the defeated countries - Germany, Austria, Hungary and Bulgaria. In determining of

its composition and its presidency during the periodic meetings/conferences, in discussions on the adoption of organizational documents, of which the Final Status of the Danube (FSD) is of particular value, the representatives of the four countries have the opportunity to make adequate statements. Their regulated participation, which is respected as an important principle in the commission, is an undoubted "breakthrough" in the peace treaty system, since the recent memory of the Paris Peace Conference (1919–1920) left a bitter taste. The absence of discriminatory clauses in the FSD injuring some riverside state at the expense of another, suggests a possible alternative for understanding in post-war Europe, but the evil done in Versailles, Neuilly, Saint-Germain, Trianon and North is difficult to erase.

Assoc. Prof. Karaganev has devoted a considerable amount of his exposition to the participation and role of Bulgaria in the IDC. Many contributing points can be enumerated here, as the activities of our country have not been the focus of such a study for an extended period. The research shows Bulgaria's presence in the IDC, which goes through different phases, depending on the political disasters in Europe. In the first years since the commission was set up, its involvement is not very noticeable. The attention as a state and society focuses heavily on the "open wounds" of the Bulgarian national issue, while the northern direction of the Bulgarian historical lands, and in particular the issue of navigation along the Danube, is ignored and often "forgotten". According to the author's conclusions, for a long period a comprehensive strategy for establishment and development of the river fleet was lacking, despite the abating problems concerning the financial and military constraints of the Treaty of Neuilly clauses. Contributing moments in the research are the included scientific documents with little known facts, concerning the country's desire to overcome the stagnation in the development of Bulgarian river navigation since 1934.

The exposition analyzes the foreign policy situation, which is full of contradictions, and its influence on the activities of the IDC. Germany's special

place is fully justified – it has become a paramount factor in the Danube-Balkans region with a highly aggressive strategy that escalated in the late 1930s of XX century. Her example is "contagious" because documentary evidence shows that the battle for hegemony in navigation on Danube River, included also USSR, after the intervention in Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina in the summer of 1940.

In Assoc. Prof. Karaganev, research, based on primary documental materials, the changes that occurred in Bulgaria towards the final stage of the IDC in 1940 are analyzed, heralding the end of an era. From a Balkan outsider two decades ago, she again became a coveted partner with increased authority.

In conclusion, I find that the topic of this study concerns an important intergovernmental organization – the International Danube Commission, which has no analogue in European history. The work not only follows with expert analysis its activity and management. It outlines the different stages of its work related to the changes in the socio-political and economic development of Europe, and particularly in Bulgaria, which since the mid-1930s has been an active participant in the geopolitics of the Balkans. The dissertation work is undoubtedly contributing. The problems developed in this study do not repeat the topic or part of the content of the dissertation with which Assoc. Prof. R. Karaganev obtained his educational and scientific degree "Doctor".

The stated positive qualities, the indicated contributions of the research and the fulfilled normative requirements give me a reason to suggest to the esteemed colleagues of the Scientific Jury to award Associate Professor Dr. Rumen Vasilev Karaganev the degree of Doctor of Historical Sciences for the research on the subject "International Danube Commission and Bulgaria 1919 –1940 (continued until 1944)".

05.01.2020 Assoc. Prof. Aleksandar Grebenarov, PhD: 