

БЪЛГАРСКА АКАДЕМИЯ НА НАУКИТЕ ИНСТИТУТ ЗА ИСТОРИЧЕСКИ И СОЦИАЛНИ НАУКИ	
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## REPORT

By Assoc. prof. Pencho D. Penchev, DSc – University of National and World  
Economy

on the thesis of assoc. prof. Rumen Vasilev Karaganev, PhD  
“*The International Danube Commission and Bulgaria 1919-1940*  
(with sequel to 1944)”

For assignment of Doctor of Science academic degree  
In Professional field: 2.2 History and Archeology

The thesis consists of 421 pages (without the chronological table at the end), which include Introduction, Two separate research parts, Bibliography, maps, and vocabulary of specific terminology. Perhaps in order to facilitate better understanding of the author`s contributions he could have divide his work into specific chapters and/or. This formal note, however, do not have the purpose to diminish the positive features of the dissertation.

The first peculiar feature that is worth noting at the outset is the clear lack of similar works in the Bulgarian historiography. Or, if we use the author's statement, even the name IDC (International Danube Commission) seldom flashes through the pages of otherwise large-scale historical literature devoted to the interwar period problems (p. 26). As for the time between the two world wars, and even before that, the potential of the Danube River did not sufficiently attract the interest and activities of the responsible Bulgarian factors, so the representatives of the Bulgarian historical science left the topic relatively unexplored. For this reason, I consider the choice of the research topic by R. Karaganev as appropriate for contributing to our limited knowledge in this field of international and economic history.

In my opinion, such research has an important scientific potential. The accumulation of sufficient number of publications on the Bulgarian attitude towards the Danube River and the seas surrounding the Bulgarian lands could give an adequate answer to the more general and important question about the causes and consequences of the centuries-old Bulgarian fear and even aversion of the waterways and their commercial opportunities perspectives. Waterways are opening up new markets, broadening the horizons, formatting a specific way of thinking and perception of the outside world. Their systematic neglect, which is also well illustrated by Dr. Karaganev's dissertation, allows to shed additional light on the origin of some of the chronic Bulgarian economic problems.

The primary sources of the dissertation are adequate and appropriate – they are extracted mainly, but not only, from unpublished documents of the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Confessions. The author also made efforts to draw on the historiographic achievements of Bulgarian and foreign scholars, who to one degree or another touch the problem posed. Even a simple listing of the languages in which the research and primary sources used were published - Bulgarian, English, German, French, Serbian, Romanian - indicates that the dissertation author has made a serious effort to cover a large amount of the available information on the topic. It is difficult to find some factual gaps in the dissertation.

In purely factual terms, a number of contributions could be discerned in the dissertation. They are focused mainly on the orientation of Bulgaria in the Danube area, the Treaty of Neuilly-sur-Seine regulations for the positioning of the country in the Danube river system, the role of the IDC in the period between the two world wars, its structure, functions, participants and activities, the elaboration of the basic law governing the Danube river shipping, the international relations in the second half of the 1930s and their impact on the activities of the IDC, the Romanian-Yugoslav tensions regarding the regulation of traffic through the Iron Gate, etc.



Karaganev does not underestimate the negative effect on Bulgaria of the Treaty of Neuilly-sur-Seine. He suggests, however, that we should read and analyze this treaty in its entirety. Dr. Karaganev clearly notes that the provisions in the Treaty of Neuilly-sur-Seine concerning the Danube International Navigation and the Final Status of the Danube promote a different philosophy than that of blind revenge. There is a respectful attitude towards different partners, striving for proper understanding and solutions of navigation problems. In general, the ruling document concerning regulation of the Danube navigation has been evaluated as a democratic without discriminatory clauses. The author correctly regards the international Danube as a chance for overcoming the Bulgarian economic isolation during the interwar period. It gives a chance to Bulgaria and the Bulgarian economy to utilize the Danube trade artery in an appropriate and profitable way. Particularly significant and indicative of Bulgarian economic policy and of the Bulgarian perception of the opportunities for mutually beneficial international cooperation are the inappropriate reactions of various Bulgarian institutions to Czechoslovak proposals for a joint-venture company.

Some critical commentary and recommendations can be made to the dissertation under consideration. In this case, they are in no way intended to downplay the author's contributions. At the beginning, the author do not ask himself a clear, understandable, and meaningful research question, which could be interesting for non-professional historians. It is not clear to the enlightened reader of the published monograph why it is necessary and important to read it. How it can contribute to a better understanding of the roots and, accordingly, to the solution of some contemporary problems? In other words, the reader sees that the author has sacrificed time and efforts to gather and systematize historical facts, but he cannot answer the question, "So, what?".

This shortcoming do not reduce the value of the dissertation. This gives me reason to recommend to the members of the honorable academic board to assign to Rumen Vasilev Karaganev, PhD the academic degree of Doctor of Historical Sciences.

9.12.2016

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