

БЪЛГАРСКА АКАДЕМИЯ НА НАУКИТЕ ИНСТИТУТ ЗА ИСТОРИЧЕСКИ ИЗСЛЕДВАНИЯ	
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OPINION

Prepared by Prof. Roumiana Il. Preshlenova

for the dissertation entitled

"THE BALKAN POLICY OF AUSTRIA-HUNGARY 1897-1906"

of Tomasz Budai, PhD candidate at the Institute of Historical Research
at BAS

for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" (PhD)
with scientific supervisor Acad. Georgi Markov

The dissertation entitled "The Balkan policy of Austria-Hungary 1897-1906" of Tomasz Budai, PhD candidate at the Institute of Historical Research at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences for the award of the educational and scientific degree "doctor" (PhD) consists of 367 pages and contains all traditionally required elements: preface, introduction, three chapters, conclusion, and bibliography. The author has also included illustrations such as four maps and six tables as well as biographical notes of famous Austro-Hungarian personalities, participating in the formation and implementation of the Balkan policy. The structure of the dissertation is well chosen for the purposes of the research.

In the preface, T. Budai convincingly substantiates the importance of the topic of the dissertation, motivates the chosen territorial and chronological scope, formulates his goals and objectives, the structure, and the research methods. In it, he also presents his theses, which he proves further in his exposition. The dissertation includes a review of the documents used and the historiography on the topic. The author pays particular attention to the Hungarian historiography. In the end of the preface, T. Budai presents eight of his most important contributions, which are also present in the abstract.

The introduction is devoted to the peculiarities of the development of the Habsburg Empire after its transformation in 1867 into a dual monarchy under the name Austria-Hungary and three of the most important factors determining its foreign policy. The author summarizes the historical

connection of the Danube Monarchy with the Balkans and the essential components of the Eastern Question. So he justifies also the role of Russia, which during the period under review was the main rival of Austria-Hungary in the Balkans. T. Budai points out that the 19th century was the century of science. In this context, he puts the then research devoted to the cultural-historical and civilizational mission of the Dual Monarchy in the Orient, including the contributions of the Hungarians: of the diplomat Benjamin Kállay and of the scholar and politician Lajos Thallóczy. Here, one could add also the scholar and the traveller of the 1860s and 1870s Felix Philip Kanitz although his activities developed in the previous period.

In the style of classical studies on international relations, T. Budai chooses as object of the study the decade of conservative cooperation between Austria-Hungary and Russia in the Balkans in the period 1897-1906, when Vienna and St. Petersburg mutually restrained their expansionist actions in the region on the basis of the principle of maintaining the status quo and the balance of power. By this formula, the two most interested in the region Great Powers deterred also all claims of the Balkan governments for the division of the Ottoman heritage in European Turkey. These years almost fully coincide with the period in which Count Agenor Goluchowski (1895-1906) headed the Ballhaus, as one often called the Foreign Ministry of the Dual Monarchy.

The Austro-Russian restraining cooperation in the Balkans T. Budai reasonably explores within the framework of the agreement of 1897 between the two empires, of the Müzzsteg Reform program and its reaffirmation in October 1904 with their Treaty of Neutrality. Appropriately, the PhD candidate divides the research period into two subperiods, whose dividing line are the Gorna Dzumaya (1902) and the Ilinden-Preobrazhenie Uprising (1903), which are at the same time the culmination of the national liberation movement of the Bulgarians in Macedonia and Edirne Thrace.

The bilateral relations between Vienna and St. Petersburg have been traced by the author in detail in the system of international relations in the three

chapters of the dissertation, entitled respectively "The Austro-Russian Agreement in the Balkans (1897)", "The Agreement in Action (1897-1902)" and "The Austro-Russian Interaction in the Balkans (1903-1906)". In the exposition, the author eloquently revealed the growing dependence of Austria-Hungary from Germany in Southeastern Europe and the problematic and variable cooperation of the Dual Monarchy with Great Britain. One of the indisputable achievements of the dissertation is the presentation of the multifaceted nature of the relations between Vienna and St. Petersburg and their dependence on many factors in the period under consideration. They intertwined in a complex way political, strategic, economic, diplomatic, and irredentist strives. T. Budai manages to bring out the main trends, to formulate the most important highlights and to outline full-blooded images of the personalities involved. The PhD candidate also reveals the growing importance of the railway construction as an important element in the strategic plans of the Great Powers and the nation-states in the Balkans. He achieves a balance between the exposition of the common Balkan problems, especially the Armenian, Macedonian and Cretan Questions, and those specific to the individual states and emerging nations. Particular attention T. Budai rightly devotes to the efforts of the Austro-Hungarian political class to strengthen the influence of the Habsburgs among the Albanians and to stimulate the national awareness among them as a means of deterring Italy in the Adriatic and the South Slavic states of Serbia, Montenegro and Bulgaria. In the focus of the plans of the Ballhaus for action in the Albanian-populated lands are the three secret conferences in Vienna in November-December 1896, at which the elite of the Austro-Hungarian diplomacy worked out the so-called "Memorandum for Albania". T. Budai rightly puts in this context the establishment of the Balkan Commission at the Imperial Academy of Science in Vienna, which aimed to prepare researchers to contribute to a better understanding of the region in the future. Its members became the famous balkanologists (some of whom were professors at the University of Vienna) Vatroslav Jagić, Konstantin Jireček, Paul Kretschmer, Wilhelm

Meyer-Lubke, Josef von Karabacek, Benjamin Kállay, Hugo Schuhard, Maximilian Lambertz, Franz Seiner, Gjergj Pekmezi, and others. The same purpose served also the training of professional diplomats in the famous Oriental (later Consular) Academy in Vienna, the oldest diplomatic academy in the world, founded by Empress Maria Theresa in 1754. Unlike the Balkan Commission at the Imperial Academy of Sciences in Vienna, the author interprets the founding of the Hungarian Eastern Royal Academy of Commerce in 1892 in Budapest, which existed until 1920, as a manifestation of great imperial ambitions among the Hungarian political and economic elite. T. Budai pays due attention to the construction of the Athens-Bucharest axis that was instigated by Ballhaus as opposed to a potential cooperation between the southern Slavs of the peninsula.

T. Budai is fluent in Bulgarian language. Before the publication of his dissertation anyway, it is advisable to go through a linguistic edition as any other authoritative scholarly publication.

The abstract is prepared according to the requirements. The PhD candidate has publications on the topic of the dissertation with which he meets the requirements of ZRAS.

With his dissertation, Tomasz Budai demonstrates in depth knowledge of the diplomatic relations in Europe in the late 19th and early 20th century, excellent handling of their specific terms, correct use of published and unpublished documents, excellent knowledge and correct citation of available research, as well as skills for independent scholarly research. The above said makes me give an affirmative assessment of the award of Tomasz Budai to the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" (PhD).

Sofia, 16 Mai 2022