

OPINION

Of Prof. Iliana Marcheva, Institute for Historical Studies – Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

On the dissertation of Hristiyan Valeri Yotov for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the field of higher education 2. Humanities, professional direction 2.2. History and archaeology, doctoral program "History of Bulgaria" on the topic "RELATIONS BETWEEN BULGARIA AND THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION (NATO) - 1990 - 1997".

The topic of relations between Bulgaria and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) between 1990 and 1997 was not the subject of independent development in Bulgarian historiography. It is important for a better understanding of Bulgarian history during the transition from the end of the 20th century, when Bulgaria was looking for its place in the new geopolitical space in Europe and the world. Hristiyan Yotov's dissertation is dedicated to the efforts of the new Bulgarian elites to cope with this task.

Hristiyan Yotov Yotov works on first-class archival Bulgarian and foreign documents, including raw funds from the diplomatic archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Moreover, the work draws on and analyzes and makes available in electronic form documents of NATO, the State Department, international meetings and foundations such as that of Bill Clinton, for example. The inclusion of many documentary collections, printed publications, specialized military publications, memoirs, which enrich the ideas about the progress of the accession processes to NATO and the problems of both the Bulgarian and the Atlantic partners, makes a very good impression. Thus, the dissertation turned out to be developed on a rich and diverse source base, which allows to outline, to one degree or another in depth, the efforts of Bulgaria to enter the orbit of NATO as a guarantee of its national security after the collapse of the Eastern Bloc.

The basic scientific literature is also impressive - ours and especially foreign ones on NATO issues and the change of Bulgarian foreign policy, which Hristiyan knows and uses to realize the goals and objectives of his research. In this sense, the interesting and undeveloped topic of dissertation work is done according to all the rules of historical science, and this is already a success for the doctoral student and, of course, for his supervisor.

The material in each chapter is well structured, despite the many additional problems that accompany the main topic of the dissertation: the history of the Warsaw Pact Organization and NATO during the Cold War, "perestroika" and changes in Soviet policy, internal political struggles in Bulgaria in the 1990s and dr.p. The conclusions drawn after each chapter and the general conclusion of the dissertation follow the logic of the exposition, systematize it and present the skills of the doctoral student to synthesize.

The dissertation is equipped with the mandatory elements such as an introduction, which includes the goals and tasks of the research, the methodology, justification of the chronological boundaries 1990 - 1997 with an internal boundary 1994 - the accession to the

NATO program "Partnership for Peace", characteristics of the primary and secondary sources, the approbation of the first results of the development. There is a conclusion substantiated in detail by the presentation, as well as a fairly extensive bibliography of the sources used by the doctoral student.

Structurally, the material is well laid out – in three chapters, each of which includes two subchapters. In the first chapter, "THE END OF THE COLD WAR AND THE NEW UNIPOLAR WORLD (1989-1991)", the main historical processes - of the creation and disintegration of the architecture of military containment between the Eastern and Western blocs during the Cold War - are very well presented. The second chapter "BEGINNING OF CONTACTS BETWEEN BULGARIA AND NATO (1990-1993)" examines in its first part a reorientation of the Bulgarian foreign policy, and in the second part, more essential for the topic of the dissertation, the first political and diplomatic contacts with NATO structures 1990-1993".

In fact, this part and the third chapter "THE PARTNERSHIP FOR PEACE INITIATIVE AND ESTABLISHING NATO MEMBERSHIP AS A STRATEGIC NATIONAL PRIORITY FOR BULGARIA (1994-1997)" (139 pages) are the main, supporting and contributing parts. In the second sub-chapter of the second chapter, the external and internal factors for the beginning of the dialogue between Bulgaria and NATO are emphasized, the leading role of the new presidential institution in the person of the first democratically elected president Zhelyu Zhelev in the policy of seeking guarantees for the national security of Bulgaria is emphasized. In the third chapter is traced the eastward expansion of; the Russian vision of creating a European system of collective security, rather than a unilateral expansion of the Alliance, as well as the lack of opportunities to enforce it; the role of the USA in Europe as a security guarantor of the conflict in Yugoslavia; the efforts of all Bulgarian governments to join Bulgaria in the "Partnership for Peace" program and its military-political implementation.

The proven conclusions of Yotov about the presence of an unspoken but followed by all Bulgarian governments since 1990 seem particularly helpful and significant to me. Finally, a consensus regarding the country's entry into NATO and, in this sense, refuting the prevailing opinion about the "seven lost years" in the country's European and Atlantic integration. On the contrary, the dissertation shows the will and ability of all Bulgarian political and diplomatic factors to follow the policy of Euro-Atlantic integration, despite some delays under the socialist government. Another merit of the dissertation is the ability of the doctoral student to build a historical narrative, to humanize it with various political and military actors, not only Bulgarian, advocating different opinions about national security policy in the rather unstable international conditions of the 1990s. And this is evidence of the achieved level of extraction from the sources of information and its logical causal description. Of course, there is analysis and evaluation of historical processes, not so much of historical characters, but it is still a dissertation for an educational and scientific degree.

In conclusion, I find that all the requirements for this type of research are met, the tasks set are realized and the conclusions drawn in the conclusions follow from the overall narrative.

The abstract corresponds to the text of the dissertation. I also accept the mentioned contributions of the doctoral student.

Therefore, I recommend the Scientific Jury to convincingly award Hristiyan Valery Yotov the scientific and educational degree "Doctor of History". I will definitely vote for this.

Prof. Iliyana Marcheva

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