

## Opinion

by Prof. Alexander Kostov,

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on the dissertation of

Kiril Georgiev Iliev,

full-time doctoral student in the Modern Balkans Section of the Institute of Balkan  
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on the topic

"Bulgaria and the Neo-Slavic Movement in the Balkans 1908–1913."

for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in professional  
field 2.2. "History and Archaeology", doctoral program "Modern and Contemporary  
General History"

First of all, I would like to note that the choice of topic for the thesis under discussion deserves respect. It is undoubtedly worthy of a dissertation due to its relevance, regardless of its neglect by (not only) Bulgarian historiography. Its illumination in a monographic study is undoubtedly important not only because of its scientific dimensions, but also in view of the developing public discussions in our turbulent times.

In my opinion, the chronological scope of the study is logically chosen, beginning with the First Preparatory Slavic Congress in Prague in 1908 as an attempt to revive the Slavic movement and ending with the great collapse of Neo-Slavism as a result of the irreconcilable conflict in Bulgarian-Serbian relations, which found its tragic manifestation during the Second Balkan War in 1913.

In terms of structure, the work includes a preface, introduction, three chapters, and a conclusion, and together with the appendix (sources and literature) has a total length of 310 pages. Right from the start, the author formulates his ambitious goal to "analyze the impact of the neo-Slavic movement on the Slavic peoples of the Balkans, its ideological motivation, genesis, and its impact on the Slavs in the early 20th century," as well as to "offer a comprehensive analysis of Neo-Slavism as a modern and progressive economic, scientific, and cultural movement that was ahead of its time and developed with great intensity on the Balkan Peninsula." In the preface, K. Iliev defines the objectives of his research, placing the main emphasis on the manifestations of Neo-Slavism in the Balkans and its influence in the region on the eve of the wars of 1912-1913. I would like to make a comment here. Expressions such as "This study proves" and "Among the main conclusions that stand out" are more typical of a conclusion than of an introduction. Moreover, they are not formulated as hypotheses.

The author has made commendable efforts to accomplish the tasks set. The sources and literature cited in the thesis and listed at the end demonstrate the author's good knowledge of the available publications related in one way or another to the topic of the thesis. The selection of sources on which the study is based also leaves a pleasant impression - documents and materials from the Central State Archives, the Bulgarian Historical Archives at the National Library "St. St. Cyril and Methodius" and the Scientific Archives of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. In addition to these, documentary collections and numerous periodicals of Bulgarian and foreign origin have also been used.

In the introduction, the author successfully introduces the reader to the question of the genesis of Neo-Slavism and its first steps in Bulgaria and the Balkans, as well as making a clear distinction between Neo-Slavism and Pan-Slavism.

The three chapters of the exposition, based on a problem-chronological approach, satisfactorily and convincingly present the main points of the topic and allow the author to draw the relevant conclusions. I have no significant comments or criticisms regarding this part. However, I must point out the presence of annoying technical and other errors, such as incorrect publication dates of books, etc. As an example, I can mention that Paul Vyšný is a British historian of Slovak origin, not

Slovenian, as the author has stated. If the work is published, such inaccuracies must be corrected.

Overall, the conclusion "integrates" the main findings of this study. It is well-argued and convincing and can be considered a successful conclusion to a well-written dissertation.

The abstract adequately reflects the main points of the work presented for evaluation. I accept the "scientific contributions" indicated by the author and consider that the work meets the requirements for the award of the educational and scientific degree of "doctor." The dissertation author's publication activity, consisting of three articles in specialized collections, meets the uniform national requirements.

In conclusion, I would like to note that the dissertation under discussion should be evaluated positively. Therefore, I call on my esteemed colleagues from the Scientific Jury to vote "yes," as I will do, and to award the current regular doctoral student Kiril Georgiev Iliev the educational and scientific degree of "doctor" in professional field 2.2. "History and Archaeology," doctoral program "Modern and Contemporary General History."

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(Prof. Al. Kostov)