

OPINION

OF

Professor Milko Palangursky, Doctor of Historical Sciences

on the doctoral thesis of **LYUBKA NIKOLAEVA NAYDENOVA** on the topic: **THE LIBERAL PARTY (RADOSLAVISTS) (1908-1912)**

for awarding the **doctoral academic degree**

Academic field: 2. Humanities

Professional field: 2.2. History and Archaeology

Doctoral candidate with the Humanities Faculty

Of the Konstantin Preslavsky University of Shumen

The doctoral thesis proposed for defence is devoted to a subject which personifies the development of one of the classic Bulgarian parties in the first years of the Kingdom declared in 1908, covering the period up to the outbreak of the Balkan Wars. The aim set in the doctoral thesis is justified – it is to explain how the Party developed structurally and ideologically, what part it took in political life, what its views were on how to address the limited sovereignty, on the Constitutional change and on current affairs.

The accomplishment of these tasks covers 444 pages, divided into Introduction, exposition – structured in chapters, with a total of eight separate paragraphs, Conclusion, Bibliography, and Appendices. The structure follows the classic patterns, but that is quite understandable, due to the fact that the text itself comprises two fields of research. The thesis is based on very good knowledge of historiographical achievements. What is more, the tasks set follow from the excellent historiographical analysis, the text is the fruit of tracking and utilizing the available documentation, published and deposited in archives,

correct and extensive use having been made of personal memories, diaries, and other accessible personal testimonies. The document collections of the Central State Archives, the Bulgarian Historical Archive, the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, and two provincial archives have been meaningfully used, most consideration logically being given to the archives of the people who personified and led the Party. Periodicals are also included.

Chapter One of the doctoral thesis consists of three paragraphs. Logically, it starts with the structural development of the party organization. The author proves the qualitative and quantitative growth of the party structure, which functions and evolves in the course of the current political struggle and particularly of the election process. The financial stabilization of the organization is highlighted – something quite rare in the Bulgarian conditions, and it was due to the earnest actions of the central leadership.

A special paragraph is devoted to the Sixth Congress of the Party, held in 1910. The Radoslavist Liberals were among the parties who had traditions in party Congresses, and were among the few organizations to not only hold Congresses and turn them into serious political events but also issued the minutes of the proceedings, which was good not only for the current political moment, but for historical research. The delegates heard 16 papers on various political, social, and economic issues, which was unknown outside the dogmatic circles of the Socialists of all stripes. The new Statutes of the Party are also examined, as well as the continuing centralization of the Party, the steadfastness of the leadership institution, the parameters of the individual structural units - a process which continued until the end of the period under consideration. Things which are also confirmed in the last paragraph in this Chapter, where the new local units are highlighted, as well as the problems around setting them up, the inclusion of new people, the internal problems in some local structures (they had long-lasting practice in that respect), Doctor Radoslavov's personal involvement in the establishment of the new party bureaus.

The author estimates that the membership of the Party numbered between 60,000 and 70,000 people on the eve of the Wars. For me, this is quite a substantial number, which actually ranks the Party among the two largest ones, but my experience with such estimates shows that this question is almost impossible to settle. A few years earlier, the count of the signatures in the minutes of the Party census yields some 9,000 active members. An eightfold growth in 4 years just could not happen, due to the absence of any drastic changes in the political situation in the country. Indeed, the author correctly recognizes the Party as an important factor – for me, this Party was undoubtedly the leader in what was seen as the Liberal space, and if, up to the Independence, the powerful structure had been that of the Stambolovists, later they were increasingly ceding the prominent place to the Radoslavists, and Doctor V. Radoslavov was already the unquestioned leader of this classic political space, and his coming to power was imminent.

Chapter Two is devoted to the country's domestic policy. What is examined is the Party's policy towards the Democratic Party, the participation in the election processes, and the Liberals' influence. This is a line of research which continues with the consideration of the Party's place in the elections for the Fifth Grand National Assembly and the constitutional amendments. Their hesitancy is explained as a result of their expectations to come to power, and that is why their behavior was rather erratic. This explanation is logical but it seems to me that they really believed in the liberal values and tried to defend them in a way, although not particularly convincingly, but with just 6 deputies in the Grand National Assembly, they could hardly do very much. As regards objectives and tasks, the third paragraph follows the same pattern, but what stands out is the different behaviour of the Party towards the new government formed by the People's Party and the Progressive Liberal Party. The Liberals contributed to the adoption of the proportional election system and in this way they much more easily turned into a factor in Parliament and in real politics.

The last chapter – **Chapter Three** – is dedicated to the political elimination of the provisions on the incomplete national sovereignty. The declaration and defence of Independence in 1908 and the subsequent 4 years of intense diplomatic preparation for the war for national unification are among the most significant moments in the new history of the country. This made the Radoslavists active, they took quite a firm stance on those sensitive issues which dominated Bulgarian public life. I agree with the conclusion that they were more active in the area of foreign policy, which is understandable, taking into account their genesis as a party at the time of the Unification, the emergence of the idea of full national independence as early as the 1880-s, and the largely radical attitudes of Doctor V. Radoslavov as Prime Minister. Of course, the “topical” accusations in the press are also cited, but they were nothing more than turf squabbles.

Logically, the national question, the behavior of the Ottoman Empire towards the Bulgarians, the results of the Young Turk Revolution, the limitations of the Exarchate, the propaganda of the neighbouring countries in the Macedonian vilayets were quite prominent in the Party’s position. In fact, they dominated its behavior and the entire idea that the solution to the national question was imminent. For the Radoslavists there was no doubt that it was to be accomplished by the implementation of the idea of Bulgaria of the Treaty of San Stefano, through autonomy on the Rumelia model, which shows that formidable theoretical power was simply absent – among both the government and the Liberals.

I would like to highlight the Appendices. Some of them are of basically informative nature but those which show the organizational growth of the Party are quite valuable and can be used as a model for studying the political parties in the country.

The text is readable, follows academic traditions, and meets the requirements for a doctoral thesis. My personal opinion is that in the event of an

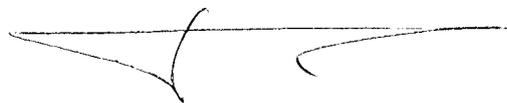
eventual publication, the text should be shortened, through a more prominent analysis. At times, the factual canvas outweighs the narrative, but that is quite logical, as, in a first research, the author cannot help but try to clarify the smallest details.

The publications attached on the topic of the doctoral thesis comply with the requirements of the law, and are sufficient for its successful defence. The Abstract adequately reflects the content of the doctoral thesis and the major contributions it makes.

Everything said above gives me grounds to recommend that the honourable Academic Jury votes for awarding **the doctoral academic degree** to **LYUBKA NIKOLAEVA NAYDENOVA**.

10 June 2021

Veliko Tarnovo



PROFESSOR M. PALANGURSKY,

DOCTOR OF HISTORICAL SCIENCES

