

OPINION

By: Professor Doctor Rositsa Angelova, Konstantin Preslavsky University of Shumen, academic field: History of Bulgaria, 05.03.06

With reference to: doctoral thesis for the award of doctoral academic degree, Professional field: 2.2. History of Bulgaria (New Bulgarian History)

Of Lyubka Nikolaeva Naydenova, extra-mural doctoral candidate in the Doctoral Programme: History of Bulgaria (New Bulgarian History), Professional field: 2.2. History and Archaeology, Higher education area: 2. Humanities

On the topic of: *The Liberal Party (Radoslavists) (1908-1912)*

Grounds for submitting the opinion: membership in the Academic Jury for the defence of the doctoral thesis, pursuant to Order No. ПД-16-088/25.05.2021 of the Rector of Konstantin Preslavsky University of Shumen

The doctoral candidate Lyubka Naydenova has selected an interesting problem for her research. The subject is topical, it has not been examined thoroughly and within this particular time frame, although individual points have been the subject of research by other authors at various times. Thus, with her doctoral thesis, Naydenova has created a kind of a model for studying the party and political history of Bulgaria.

The doctoral thesis is structured in the classic model – Introduction, three chapters of a total of eight paragraphs, Conclusion, Bibliography and ten Appendices, coming to a total volume of 444 pages.

In the Introduction, Lyubka Naydenova outlines the aims and objectives of the study, the methods of work, she substantiates the approach, describes the sources and does a historiographical review, defines the topicality of the subject. I will touch upon them briefly. The primary research aim of the doctoral thesis is “to trace its organizational development (of the Liberal Party – R. A.) in the 1908-1912 period. To find the new elements in its organizational structure, the levers and mechanisms for rallying the electoral forces, and to delineate the place of the Party among the opposition, as well as its attitude towards the institute of the monarchy and towards power. Last but not least, consideration is given to the Liberals’ attitude towards the democratic foundations of the state and to their supporters” (p. 10). The method of work is thematic and chronological and, accordingly, the author

meaningfully uses published and unpublished archival sources, analyzes statistics, reviews the periodic press available.

Doing the historiographical review, the doctoral candidate divides the literature into groups (historical works from up to the end of the 1980-s, narratives from the beginning of the 1990-s, texts of authors studying particular political forces or the political system as a whole, specific studies of the Liberal Party (Radoslavists) and its leader Doctor Vasil Radoslavov). In this way, without dwelling on the individual papers, she makes a kind of analysis of the available literature on the subject, and that literature is abundant, bearing in mind the fact that the study of the Bulgarian political parties was of great interest to researchers at the end of the XX and the beginning of the XXI century. As a result, a number of doctoral theses appeared, published afterwards as monographs – by Professor Biser Georgiev, Doctor of Historical Sciences, Professor M. Palangursky, Doctor of Historical Sciences, Professor Doctor R. Angelova, Associate Professor Svetoslav Zhivkov, and others. Lyubka Naydenova continues this tradition of studying the political activities and organizational life, but of the Liberals (Radoslavists) in a short period of time – from 1908 to 1912.

The doctoral candidate has used over 14 archival funds – mainly from the Central State Archive, the Academic Archive at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, the Bulgarian Historical Archive at the St. Cyril and St. Methodius National Library, as well as the state archives in the towns of Vidin and Shumen – without, however, citing the specific archival funds and units. It is on this basis that she examines the history of the Liberal Party (Radoslavists) in the period under consideration.

Chapter One is dedicated to the organizational development of the Liberal Party (Radoslavists). The emphasis falls on the Sixth Party Congress held in 1910. The Congress adopted new Statutes of the Party and introduced a new leadership structure. At the same time, the role of the party press was strengthened. The People's Rights newspaper became a daily. The Mutual Credit Fund was set up, and with the establishment of the district party bureaus, the hierarchical organizational structure of the Party was shaped.

Chapter Two is devoted to the Liberals (Radoslavists) and their stance on the domestic policies of the Bulgarian governments in the period up to the Balkan Wars. Despite the author's repeated claim that the Liberal Party was the first opposition party, for a long time it failed to garner a sufficient number of votes to come to power. For this reason, they rather dabbled in politics and differed from the government not only in their ideological views but also in their foreign policy orientation. Their views came close solely in the area of the

economic and social policy. A separate paragraph in Chapter Two is dedicated to the Liberals' position on the issue of the amendments to the Tarnovo Constitution in 1911.

Chapter Three is based on the foreign policy actions of the government and the attitude of the Liberals (Radoslavists) to these actions. What is discussed is: the attitude to the declaration of the Independence of Bulgaria, to the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization and what was happening within the Ottoman Empire as regards the Christian population there, their stance on the national unification and the paths to achieving it.

In the Conclusion, the author emphasizes that in the period under consideration the Liberal Party achieved organizational growth and turned into the first – or at least a leading – opposition force /p. 402/. If this is true is shown by historical events – neither the selection of the monarch, nor His Majesty the Voter supported this claim, and on the eve of the Balkan Wars Russophile parties again stood at the helm of the Kingdom of Bulgaria.

The Appendices illustrate the conclusions and are appropriate for the thesis. Copies of identity cards of Liberals during the period under consideration, a letter from the Tran local unit to the Mutual Credit Fund of the Liberal Party, a telegram, minutes and front pages of the People's Rights newspapers are included. The charts show what the author sees as the growth of the Liberal Party in the 1895-1910 period, the organizational structure of the Party. They and the Table, devoted to the newly-formed units of the Party in the 1911-1912 period, further enrich the doctoral thesis.

There are omissions and imperfections in the thesis. It would be good, if L. Naydenova used the materials stored in the regional state archives, the texts of a number of authors who have summarized the political life in many Bulgarian towns, and compared them with the Party materials – this could lead to an adjustment in the evaluation of the place and the role of the Liberal Party (Radoslavists) in the Kingdom of Bulgaria during the period under consideration.

In conclusion, the thesis submitted is a good model of how to study a political party in the Principality/Kingdom of Bulgaria, the execution is good and it is supported by source and historiographical data. The basic canvas of the text are the materials from the periodic press and the Party documents. The academic accuracy is an additional merit of the thesis submitted. The aims and objectives set in the Introduction have been accomplished. The Abstract and the Reference for the contributions correspond to the content. In the Abstract there are certain repetitions of the conclusions and findings.

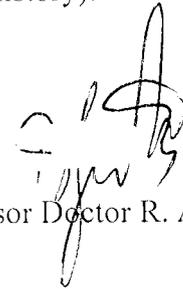
Lyubka Naydenova has three publications in academic journals and one article accepted for publication; she has not participated in academic forums to present materials on the topic of the doctoral thesis.

The contributions and merits of the thesis highlighted above give me grounds to unequivocally state that the doctoral thesis meets the requirements, and to recommend that the honourable Academic Jury award to Lyubka Nikolaeva Naydenova the doctoral academic degree in Professional field: 2.2. History and Archaeology; Higher education area: 2. Humanities; Academic field: History of Bulgaria (New Bulgarian History).

19 June 2021

Shumen

Signature:



/Professor Doctor R. Angelova /