**REVIEW**

By Prof. Dr. Nadia Manolova-Nikolova

Regarding

The dissertation work of Denis Bogomilov Ivanov on the topic:

"Ivan Drasov - the Unknown and Underappreciated Activist of the Bulgarian

National Liberation Movement"

Scientific field: 2. Humanities; Professional field 2.2 History and archaeology: History of Bulgaria (History of the Bulgarian Revival ХVIII – ХIX centuries)

Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" - Faculty of History - Department "History of Bulgaria"

Denis B. Ivanov graduated from Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv, where he received a Bachelor's degree with the professional qualification of an archaeologist and a history teacher. At the same university, he studied for a Мaster's degree. He defended his master's thesis related to the national liberation deed of Vasil Levski. His work on the currently presented doctoral dissertation is in a way a continuation of it. He enrolled as a doctoral student in the Faculty of History of Sofia University, department "History of Bulgaria" - department "Bulgarian Revival" with a full-time study period from March 1, 2021 to March 1, 2024 with the academic supervisor Prof. Dr. Plamen Mitev. He completed it within the term with the right for a defense.

I know Denis Ivanov as a doctoral student in the field of "Bulgarian Revival" in the department "History of Bulgaria" at the Faculty of History of Sofia University. His doctoral studies were preceded by gaining professional experience working at the Chirpan Historical Museum. As a doctoral student, he took part in many national and regional scientific forums. As can be seen from the attached references, these participations have resulted in a number of publications. Twelve of them are directly related to the topic of his dissertation. The result is the dissertation prepared for defense on the topic "Ivan Drasov - the Unknown and Underappreciated Activist of the Bulgarian National Liberation Movement".

All the materials provided for the defense, the abstract and the attached publications on the subject meet the legal requirements, according to the Regulations for the acquisition of scientific degrees at SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" and the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria. The certificate of compliance with the national minimum requirements for the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" shows a total of 50 points on indicator A and on indicator D - 150 points. No evidence of plagiarism was found.

In the defense documentation, D. Ivanov presents a list of his publications that are directly related to the dissertation. They can be divided into two groups: publications that deal with relatively short topics, such as those about the attitude of Ivan Drasov towards Macedonia, his opinion on the Chetnik actions, his efforts to preserve the memory of Levski; and the second group, in which the articles examine in detail key moments of Drasov's biography: about Drasov's committee activity in 1872 and leaving Bulgaria; for his functions in the Lovchan Committees; his studies in the Czechia; his contacts with Konstantin Ireček; the translation of the biography of Giuseppe Mazzini; the "treacherous behavior" of Karavelov. The most detailed article concerns the creation of the Bulgarian Revolutionary Central Committee /Central Bulgarian Revolutionary Committee or CBRC according to the author/ in Bulgaria and with which the author engages in an almost permanent discussion. So, by preparing these articles, the doctoral student has rationalized his dissertation work by incorporating these previous studies.

In the introduction of the dissertation, the motivation of the dissertation student to undertake the research of the topic is clarified. The grounds are acceptable, as there are conflicting assessments of Ivan Drasov, there are already a number of new published documents about the national movement in the 19th century, and a detailed biography will help the overall illumination of the history of Bulgarian efforts for liberation from Ottoman rule. An acceptable structure is outlined with an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, a bibliography and a list of abbreviations. The total volume is 501 pages, and the sources and literature used cover pages 457 to 500, with a wide range of sources and authors. The problem-chronological principle of exposition used is completely acceptable, with clearly defined goals and accepted limitations in the research - regarding e.g. at the place of birth, etc. However, the explanation for the lack of sources from Pisek, Czech Republic, where the doctoral student could work under the Erasmus+ program, is not acceptable.

The used sources are covered in four groups, united by type of content: a group of biographical writings about Ivan Drasov; of writings about the National Liberation Movement; of studies on the enlightenment during the Revival and a fourth group of essays tracing the municipal administration in Lovech. I am aware that the sources are many and different in nature, so their systematization is difficult, but I have a certain objection to grouping together texts of different nature. For example, in the second group, both memoirs from the time after the Liberation and the scientific works on Drasov's biography are combined. The fate of Drasov's archive after his death has also been traced. This is a valuable author's work, who clarified the locations of the constituent parts of the Drasov's archive.

**The first chapter** focuses on the life and socio-political activity of Ivan Drasov in the period up to 1872. The first paragraph dwells in detail - as far as the sources allow - on his family history - specifying the date of birth, the fate of his father, his education. Emphasis is placed, and with reason, on the difficult childhood of Drasov, who became fatherless at an early age. The important role of his mother is pointed out, a mother who managed to raise her children alone. The public activity of his relatives, participants in the church movement and an example for the young Drasov, is also well presented. The dissertation dwells in detail on the meeting between Drasov and Levski, which played a major role in the young man's life. For the time being, in the use of various memoirs from a much later time, its concretization in time remains uncertain.

The second paragraph of the first chapter is devoted to Drasov's work in the Lovchan Committee until 1872, i.e. until his departure to the Czechia. Since a number of issues from this period are controversial in the literature, the author has divided their considerations into five separate sub-paragraphs. In the first one, he dwells on the creation of the Lovchan Revolutionary Committee, suggesting a later time than the years that have been accepted so far - the end of 1870 and the beginning of 1871. The contradictions of the preserved testimonies do not allow greater clarity for now. The second subparagraph is related to the trip of Drasov and Marin Poplukanov to Romania, which mission is the first documented manifestation of the young revolutionary. There is only one trip and it was in March-April 1871, which I think is conclusively proven. This is not the case with the purposes of the trip, but buying weapons seems the most acceptable. The memoirs here also include other elements, such as the purpose of evaluating the relations between the revolutionary activists in emigration - something for which the then young people Drasov and Poplukanov do not seem to me to be suitable persons at all. The third subsection examines a number of controversial issues regarding the creation of the CBRK in Lovech, its parallel existence with the private committee there, and why Levski chose Lovech as the center of the Internal Organization. The author's answers are valid, but they bring up other questions - for example, if there were two committees, what were the differences in their functions, how were they specified, and other details. The fourth sub-paragraph examines the equally controversial issues surrounding Drasov's functions as secretary of the two committees in Lovech and his role as treasurer performed under certain circumstances. I agree with the thesis that one thing is the sources documenting the existence of a treasurer of the organization, and quite another is the real situation in which this function was assumed by Levski, and also by Drasov when necessary. /c. 93/ In the fifth subparagraph, Drasov's contributions to the committee case in Lovech are specified, apart from his secretarial work - attracting new co-conspirators, participation in committee meetings - central and local, participation in the preparation of terrorist acts, participation in theatrical performances in Lovech. In the fifth subparagraph, Ivanov dwells in detail on the question of why Drasov left Lovech and went to study in the Czechia. All possible assumptions which were already made in the literature used are presented. The author has no specific answer, except for the one given by Drasov, and with reason.

**Chapter Two** is entitled "First Emigrant Years September 1872 - June 1875" and contains six paragraphs. The paragraphs correspond to different sides of Drasov's activity in this three-year, but new and dynamic period in his life. Following his chosen way of building his work, Denis Ivanov traces in detail all possible sources in order to answer a series of questions about Drasov's studies in the Czechia - initially in Pisek, and briefly in Prague. The following are clarified: the time of his stay there, the training program, the reasons for the termination of his education, as well as Drasov's agitation among the students in Tabor, Pisek and Prague for the creation of revolutionary committees, although the results were not in accordance with his wishes. The way in which Drasov perceived the trial of Levski and the arrested co-conspirators in the "Arabakonak adventure" is clarified, as his trying to understand the reasons for the capture of the Apostle in December 1872 - the spring of 1873. Paragraphs 2.4 - 2.8 of this chapter, concerning the arising conflict in the BRCC in the summer and autumn of 1874 and the spring of 1875 are especially detailed. In my opinion, the text is unnecessarily burdened with quotes from letters, only to clarify that in this period Drasov did not take sides in the Karavelov-Botev conflict. And to this circumstance, in fact, the correspondence proves the chaotic state of the efforts to experience the crisis in the revolutionary movement, proves the incorrect judgments of the political situation, etc. In great detail, even to the point of weariness, the reader must read the famous letters of the revolutionaries Stambolov and Botev to Drasov, in order to repeat the already stated and proven conclusion of Prof. Mitev, for the purposes of the two revolutionaries - why? Having accepted his opinion, the author could only have quoted Prof. Mitev.

In the discussions about Drasov and the press, letters with essentially the same content are also used, and this repetition could be avoided - p. 203, etc.; the exposition on the distribution of propaganda materials, the attitude to the church question, to enlightenment, and others, is unnecessarily stretched. In fact, during this period, being in the Czechia, apart from sharing thoughts in letters, Drasov could do nothing else. The presentation of Drasov's attempt to summarize the development of the revolutionary efforts for Bulgarian liberation is interesting and good, as well as the translation of the biography of J. Macini. The author clarifies in detail Drasov's contribution to the development of Bulgarian-Czech cultural ties and especially the established contacts with famous Czech intellectuals - Prof. Hejduk, Konstantin Irecek, etc. The established selections surrounding Drasov's personal life in this period of his life are also curious.

**The third chapter** covers the activity of Iv. Drasov at the time of the Eastern crisis 1875 to 1878. Drasov's accession to Botev's group, the work on the general assembly in August 1875 is traced in great detail; the manipulations to attract like-minded people for the future uprising, etc. The author adheres to the already expressed opinions of Prof. Mitev, defended regarding BRC since 1875, and I see no point in presenting documentary materials in the text again in the same direction. This does not contribute to any new opinion about Drasov and his role in these months of the same year, pp. 287-298. When examining the BRC, Drasov's secretarial work is explained in detail. The lack of money and confidence in the Committee's intended actions are pointed out, but why are not they explained? /pp. 310, 321/. The failure of the August 1875 decisions was followed by further attempts to justify the failure and to raise funds, which also failed. The author of the dissertation does not think that Drasov had any fault in creating mistrust and disunity among the emigration. The Braila decisions of March 6, 1876, in which Drasov also took part, were clearly unrealistic, especially given the demands made to the Serbian government! - p. 342. It seems to me that a more objective assessment of Drasov's actions is needed, in relation to which the author takes a justifying position and shows partiality.

In several subsections of paragraph 3 of the third chapter, Drasov's journalistic efforts during the same period are set forth. The issues surrounding the issue of "Vazrazhdane" newspaper have been well posed and clarified. But the title "Ideology of nespaper Vazrazhdane" seems to me inappropriate and inconsistent with what was presented. The complex relationship between the editors of the newspaper and the Bulgarian Central Charitable Society in 1876 has been thoroughly examined. However, Drasov's specific journalistic contribution to the newspaper remains to be clarified in the future, if this is possible.

The fourth paragraph of the third chapter is dedicated to Drasov's activities on the eve of the Russo-Turkish war, clarifying the ideas about the campaign, intelligence work for the benefit of the Russian army and his participation in the first free city council in Lovech. His management as the chairman of the council, which has not been so far a subject of special study and also has a contributing character, is examined in detail.

**The fourth chapter** examines the national activist Ivan Drasov as one of the personalities after the Liberation who formed the image of the national movement against the Ottoman power. It is made up of two paragraphs, the first one dedicated to preserving the memory of the National Liberation Movement through Drasov's activities in this direction, and the third - about preserving the memory of Drasov himself. And here the author presents his position on the controversial issues, well defended.

The conclusion of the dissertation presents the author's main theses and conclusions from the four chapters of the dissertation in a summarized and step-by-step manner.

Regarding the style and means of expression used by the author of the dissertation, I will note that he uses a clear and precise literary language, fully suitable for this type of research. At the same time, I do not consider certain language phrases to be acceptable. The phrase "a definite answer cannot be given" is often encountered, which is initially perceived well by the reader, but with its numerous repetition becomes somewhat of a cliche.

**I consider the following to be the main achievements of the author:**

- very good analysis of sources, with thorough tracking of their use and reuse. A Critical Approach to Memoirs and Documents.

- critical use of the numerous writings on the subject.

- the contribution of Ivan Drasov to the national liberation deed, as well as his contribution to the popularization of the works of the most famous revolutionary activists of the Revival is convincingly and meticulously proven.

Along with the highlighted positive aspects of the multi-sheet work, I will highlight some critical notes:

- the text should be shortened, reducing redundant, repetitive documents, and especially those whose use does not lead to tangible results. Such are the letters which are too famous in historical literature. It is as if the author tried to include all the materials from his work process in the dissertation, which is not necessary.

- The study should be supplemented with a follow-up of Drasov's life and activities after the Liberation. Critical and necessary is the combination of documents with memoirs in many of the elucidated points of contention in the study, yet more is needed. It is good to point out the circumstances /not only the occasions/ under which the memories of Drasov and the fighters connected with him in Bulgaria arose.

The application for the defense abstract dwells in detail on the main structural elements of the dissertation work, clarifying the most important contributing ideas in it. The abstract meets all the requirements for presenting the dissertation.

As a result of the analysis of the dissertation, publications and active doctoral activity in the period 2021 - 2024, the well-defended author's theses, I express my positive opinion for awarding the Educational and Scientific Degree "Doctor" to Denis Bogomilov Ivanov and I vote " YES".

April 4, 2024 Reviewer: Prof. Dr. Nadia Manolova-Nikolova

Sofia ................................................. .................

In the defense documentation, D. Ivanov presents a list of his publications that are directly related to the dissertation. The dissertation student is actively involved in the scientific life not only in the Faculty of History in Sofia University, but also on a national level. The publications presented for the defense can be divided into two groups:

- short ones - Drasov for Macedonia, Drasov's work to preserve Levski's memory; his opinion on the Chetnik actions;

- long - for the contacts with K. Ireček, for the translation of the biography of J. Macini; about Karavelov's "treacherous behavior"; about Drasov's committee activity in 1872; for his functions in the Lovchansky Revolutionary Committee; his studies in the Czechia and the influence this education on him; about his activities in 1872 and his departure from Bulgaria;

and the most detailed article concerning the time of the creation of the Central Bulgarian Revolutionary Commitee in Bulgaria - of a discussion nature

IVAN DRASOV –

Denis Ivanov

INTRODUCTION

The need for a detailed study of Drasov is well-founded;

- Critical analysis of the previously existing literature about Drasov, about his diverse activities - on the church question, enlightenment, revolution

- A detailed exposition of the sources - sources and historiography, uses of foreign ones as well, as Drasov lived and worked for some time in emigration

A well-constructed structure, especially with the last chapter, which is up-to-date, looks at the contemporary mass knowledge/ignorance of Drasov and asks the question again - which people from the Revival period should we elevate/keep in the public memory through our historical studies. Of course, it is also related to our master's degree and our modern teaching in Master's Programme "Revival and Memory"

Chapter 1. Early years, the first meeting with Levski - the influence of this person, all data, mainly from later times, are carefully examined in a critical plan, the author always takes a certain opinion, and when there is none due to lack of evidence - he leaves the question open, states it clearly.

Using letters and documents from the era and comparing them with memoirs from a later time - in one occasion from a contemporary - is a circumstantial approach in this case, but it could quite deceptive. However, I think that the doctoral student managed the analysis, probably with the active help of his supervisor Prof. Mitev. Because it is mixing memoirs with history/document with memoirs/

Regarding the first chapter, there is a clarification of: date of birth; studies?; reason for entering revolutionary circles; activity in Lovech - Levski's opinion of him is high; leaving for education abroad - reasons, Drasov's words remain and they are personal.

Chapter 2 - in Pisek, the differentiation of his activities makes it possible to trace them in detail, to look for the correct or correct answer to a number of unspecified moments of his biography, and this also determines the more accurate assessment of the work of this public figure.

1. Training - it's interesting but he could have gone to a place on Erasmus and clarified things in place.

2. The revolutionary activity - many interesting clarifications about the work in Prague, Tabor and especially in Pisek again using the same method - comparing, specifying the most realistic possible choice for dating and establishing the efforts to build committees, although not entirely successful, attracting the Bulgarian youth to the national liberation cause.

3. His work with the Central Committee - very detailed, almost day by day, in the letters between the actors, especially in 1873-74, at the end of 74, when there was a big rift between Karavelov and Botev, things were discussed almost day by day - apparently with the aim to their reasons and positions are clarified.

/there are some missed phrases here and there, misspelling due to haste - to review/

In many ways, Drasov is a key figure in the Natioanl Liberation Movement, in understanding the relationship between Karavelov, Botev, and all the famous revolutionaries, less known to the public.

4. Drasov is also considered as a public figure in the field of education, the church movement, etc. such as the distribution of innovative literature, translations, interests in history, connections with K. Irechek, etc.

5. Personal life - learned to dance, play the piano 2

Chapter 3. Ivan Drasov during the Eastern Crisis 1875-1878.

With the separate paragraphs: here a broken thread of the narrative about the relations from Pisek to the Emigrants in Romania and Belgrade continues to clarify why Drasov supports Botev and not Karavelov, whom he had known for a long time?!

1.4 - this paragraph about Drasov's role in the summer of 1875 - many quotes, in many directions, to redo! The goods to be sold, not to be sold .... around these hesitations the reader might get lost! One basic question is not answered here - why does the emigrant committee did not give money for the BRK initiative - for me there is only one explanation - they did not trust this committee, no matter how many different authors give it a halo, etc.

Mitev is often cited - well, if it is proven, why are the documents used by Mitev cited and the text emphasized! To prove that this attempted uprising was a failure, even though Drasov was the head of the BRC - they had influence, but it is no accident that the cunning Hitov transferred the responsibilities to him.

There are more information and clarifications on his activities in the spring of 1876, including the Gyurgev activists who were away from him

1876 - Drasov's article is recounted in great detail - why

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