

STATEMENT OF OPINION

From: Professor Blaga Ivanova Blagoeva, PhD;

UNWE, Department of “Political Sciences”; Subject of Research: 3.3 Political Sciences

Re: dissertation paper for awarding the academic title of PhD

Professional sphere 3.3 Political Sciences,

Scientific specialty Political Science - National political process,

PhD Program "Political Science",

Sofia University “St. Kliment Ochridski”, Faculty of Philosophy, Department of “Political Sciences”

Topic of the dissertation paper: **Prerequisites for the radicalization of the social democratic movement in Bulgaria, 1891-1923. The Bulgarian Labor Social Democratic Party (Narrow Socialists) – from Social Democracy to Communism"**

Author of the dissertation paper: **Christian Krassimirov Stefanov**

1. Data on the doctorate, dissertation, abstract and publications.

In my position of member of the Research Board, I hereby confirm the following facts:

- (1) The present course of study has been conducted in a regular form of the doctoral program;
- (2) The dissertation paper has been discussed and submitted for public defense by the department of “Political Sciences“ at the faculty of Philosophy of Sofia University;
- (3) All procedural and legal requirements concerning the scheduled procedure of public defense have been properly observed;
- (4) The candidate for the doctoral title has carried out the minimal number of national requirements in accordance with Article 2b, paragraphs 2 and 3 of ZRASRB regulations;
- (5) The abstract contains the necessary elements and information that correspond to/and adequately reflect the content of the dissertation work. I note that the author's abstract

lacks a self-assessment of the contribution points made by the dissertation, although it is indirectly present in the content.;

- (6) A reference for the required publications is presented - 3 publications in Bulgarian (for one, an official note is presented that it is under seal). The listed publications reflect separate issues from the dissertation research.

The dissertation submitted for defense is relevant for Bulgarian political theory, because it provides in-depth and systematized information both about the history of the Bulgarian political process and a modern interpretation of the processes in the social democratic movement in Bulgaria from the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. Moreover, the prerequisites for the radicalization of social democracy and the transition from social democracy to communism are brought into focus through an analysis of the BRSDP (so-called), which initially contains controversial and scholarly debate-provoking possibilities for analysis that goes beyond the standard historical interpretation. However, this perspective in the analysis poses many risks and dangers. It is about motivating and theoretically defending the choice of problem fields, about criteria for the selection of arguments, about the choice of theoretical approaches... An extraordinary breadth of thinking, theoretical accumulations, historical culture and a precise research focus are required for the study to be not just a historical narrative but a thorough analysis. Therefore, I applaud the PhD student's choice of topic and appreciate all the difficulties the dissertation writer faced.

The topic of the research is correctly formulated. It itself is distinguished by a balanced combination of theoretical knowledge, author's argumentation and generalization skills.

In terms of content, Christian Stefanov's research is characterized by precision of analysis, free interpretation of theses and author's opinions, correctness of references and citations.

Structurally, the work is balanced and "follows" the title of the dissertation - each of the main factors of radicalization is analyzed in an independent structural unit; among the other required elements of the research - introduction, conclusion and bibliography.

The total volume of the dissertation – 274 pages (241 pages of main text) fully meets (and even exceeds) established standards. The used literary sources, correctly divided into monographs and articles, press materials and archival documents, are completely satisfactory in terms of time relevance and thematic focus.

The Introduction contains the required attributes – object and subject; main purpose; methodological toolkit (which has been used adequately and productively); theoretical framework; research logic (plan); research hypotheses.

It makes an extremely good impression that the doctoral student demonstrates a high degree of knowledge of the scientific literature on the researched issue, uses it adequately and productively, and comments motivated and competently.

The analysis is logical and consistently presents the main factors for the radicalization of social democracy in Bulgaria: the rural protest policy; ideological clashes; the socio-political crisis during the Balkans and the First World War; the international communist movement and the Comintern; political violence in post-war Bulgaria. It makes a very good impression that the mentioned factors were not analyzed for their own sake, but in the context of the formulated author's hypotheses, looking for the internal connection between the factors predisposing to radicalization. Each of the chapters ends with precisely formulated conclusions and conclusions of the analysis. This shows a good degree of meaningfulness and the personal position of the author.

As a merit of the entire dissertation research, I define the author's aspiration for maximum objectivity of analyzes and the distancing from extreme political assessments and biases.

In addition to the above, figures and diagrams (author's own) were also used in the study, which illustrate the text and systematize the conclusions.

The conclusion synthetically presents the obtained results and conclusions reached by the author.

In terms of content, I allow myself to highlight, following the logic and structure of the text, the following indisputable merits of the dissertation research:

- (1) The analysis of political radicalization in Bulgaria is placed in the context of "modern European politics", and the radicalization of social democracy in our country is examined on the basis of the understanding of "political radicalization", defined as "evolution in the ideology, theory and worldview of a given social agent".
- (2) The research is conducted and contextualized in interdisciplinary frameworks. It uses both approaches from modernization theories (established in the fields of political sociology and political science) and approaches from "new trends in social and political historiography dealing with themes of radical politics in the early 20th century".

- (3) Stefano Bartolini's model ("The Political Mobilization of the European Left, 1860-1980") was productively used to explain the relative strength of the communist parties in Europe when analyzing the radicalization of the social democratic movement in Bulgaria. The thesis is defended and proven that regardless of "some nuances, specifics and additions, the Bulgarian case corresponds well with the macro-social factors and political mechanisms outlined in the theory and research of other countries, leading to the emergence of political violence and radical communist politics".
- (4) On the basis of the thus outlined theoretical framework, the author of the dissertation research brings out and analyzes the main factors in the process of radicalization of social democracy in Bulgaria: the rural protest policy; ideological clashes; the socio-political crisis during the Balkans and the First World War; the international communist movement and the Comintern; political violence in post-war Bulgaria. The manifestation and power of influence of the mentioned factors is examined not simply in historical sequence and context, but through the methods of political analysis.

2. Evaluation of scientific and scientific-applied contributions

Contributory points in the dissertation research, according to my assessment, are related to the following:

First, the dissertation research complements and enriches the Bulgarian specialized literature on the topic of political radicalization and the factors that determine it. The author's contribution is that, on the basis of the tools of political science, an attempt has been made to identify, define and enrich problematic and debatable issues on the topic of radical left-wing politics in the Balkans and the mechanisms for the radicalization of the BSDP. The dissertation puts the mentioned problems both in the general European context of political change in the 19th century and in the crisis resulting from the First World War and political violence and ideological radicalism in Europe.

Second, the analysis of the radicalization of social democracy in Bulgaria was carried out on the basis of Bartolini's model of "stagnant modernization", highlighting the specifics and peculiarities of the process in national frameworks.

Third, the main factors for the radicalization of the BRSDP (so-called) have been identified, systematized and analyzed on the basis of an interdisciplinary approach. The mentioned factors are analyzed comprehensively, in their interrelationships and subordination.

Fourthly, the introduction to scientific use of facts and evidentiary material from archival materials and original documents, some of which have not been used until now, is a contributing element to the dissertation research.

3. Critical notes, recommendations and questions

I have no serious substantive criticisms. I allow myself a question related to the PhD student's claim that certain "communal standards become the organizational and political basis for the formation of "common people's political culture" - a term denoting the moral notions, mythologies, senses of legitimacy and social justice shared by the lower classes in early modern Europe that enabled political mobilization and the initiation of collective repertoires of protest in a moment of crisis threatening custom and the traditionally established way of life'.

My question is: How does the nature (and characteristics) of the Bulgarian national political culture influence the radicalization processes of social democracy in Bulgaria?

4. Conclusion

Mr Christian Stefanov's dissertation paper contains theoretical and practically applicable results. I hereby state that the dissertation work meets the requirements of ZRASRB and the Regulation of its application. Therefore, I suggest that the scientific board award Mr. Christian Stefanov the academic title of PhD in professional sphere 3.3. Political Sciences, Scientific specialty Political Science - National political process.

05.02.2025, Sofia

Signed:

(Prof. Blaga Blagoeva, PhD)