

REVIEW

REGARDING: The dissertation of Kremena Georgieva Dias
PhD student at the Department of "New and Contemporary History"
at the Faculty of History of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

on the topic "*The Evolution of Resistance and Opposition Movements Against the Military Dictatorship in Brazil (1964-1985)*" for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the field of higher education "Humanities", professional field 2.2. "History and Archaeology" (New and Recent General History - Contemporary History)

by Dr. Jordan Angelov Baev - Professor of New and Recent History, member of the scientific jury according to Order No. RD 38-787/22.12.2025 of the Rector of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

Kremena Dias has a Bachelor's degree in Portuguese Philology and a Master's degree in History (Crises, Conflicts and Diplomacy in World Politics XVI-XXI Century) from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". In the period 2014-2022, she worked as a consular officer at the Embassy of Brazil in Bulgaria, and since 2023 she has been a researcher R-1 at the Department of Portuguese and Lusophone Studies at the Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". Since 2014, she has been a part-time lecturer in Portuguese Language and Civilization of Portugal and Brazil in the same department.

The presented dissertation with a size of 402 pages is structured in three chapters with a total of 9 paragraphs and 8 biographical appendices. The introduction justifies the relevance of the topic, indicates the thesis and the main goal of the study, which are to be achieved through the implementation of eight clearly formulated research tasks. The object and subject of the study are defined and the chosen research methodology is characterized by adopting an interdisciplinary approach through the use of historical, political, sociological and cultural methods. The chronological scope of the dissertation is extensive and rich in dynamics and political twists. The doctoral student has adopted the established historical periodization, but what distinguishes the study from the very beginning is the aspiration to reach deep dichotomous levels of roots and prerequisites, development and consequences, evolution and

alternatives of power and opposition, personalities and societies, socio-economic and cultural phenomena and processes. Although this is the first study of its kind on the contemporary history of Brazil in Bulgarian historiography, it has a comprehensive, detailed and complete form. It is distinguished not only by a correct and reliable interpretation of key studies in Brazilian historiography, but also by the introduction of a number of basic documentary collections from major Brazilian archives. The author's interviews with prominent Brazilian scientists, cultural and trade union figures, some of whom were active participants in the anti-dictatorship resistance, also significantly contribute to the original nature of the dissertation. The topic under discussion has given rise to extremely lively professional discussions in Brazil in the last two decades, contributed to by the discovery of a huge volume of new documentary evidence as a result of the adoption of the Access to Information Act (2011) and the activities of the National Truth Commission (2012). The historiographical overview distinguishes three leading theoretical trends on the issue in contemporary Brazilian historiography.

Due to the fact that Kremena Dias is a representative of Bulgarian historical science, I will allow myself the recommendation that in her future research she also use the available Bulgarian archival sources and publications on Brazilian history. For example, in the personal archive of Georgi Dimitrov are preserved his notes “on the Brazilian question” after talks with Carlos Prestes, Fernando Lacerda and Octavio Brandão in October 1934 in Moscow shortly before the illegal departure of Prestes and Rodolfo Ghioldi to Brazil. These talks contribute to overcoming the previous dogmatic concepts about the “bourgeois-landowner positions of Prestesism”. By the way, in early January 1934, even the Constituent Assembly of Brazil in its declaration qualified the verdict against the accused Bulgarians in the Reichstag Fire Trial as a “political crime”. A letter from Carlos Prestes' sister, Lydia, who worked for Dimitrov in the Secretariat of the Comintern, and years later, when the Bulgarian legation was opened in Rio de Janeiro in March 1961, was briefly an employee in the legation, has also been preserved. Various analytical documents on the anti-dictatorship resistance, including confidential reports of the Bulgarian ambassadors in Brazil, are kept in the records of the International Department (VPMV) of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party for the period 1967-1990, which was made accessible six years ago. The dissertation briefly mentioned that after 1964 the leadership of the PCB fell into “paralysis”, turned into a “legalist and institutional opposition” to the regime and became marginalized, without the PhD student revealing the evolution of these views in the period 1964-1979 and after the replacement of Prestes with Giocondo Dias and Salomao Molina. Therefore, it is useful to examine the essential program documents of the

party, placed in a total of 15 issues of the monthly Information Bulletin of the VPMV Department for the period 1966-1986 (also available in the National Library in Sofia). Specific interesting details are also contained in the transcripts of Carlos Prestes' talks with members of the Bulgarian political leadership during his visits to Sofia - six in number for the period 1968-1978. It is no coincidence that in 1973, the Sofia Press publishing house published in Portuguese and Spanish for distribution in Latin America the brochure by Luis Carlos Prestes "The Terrorist Dictatorship in Brazil".

Probably the first testimonies and assessments in Bulgarian historiography about the resistance against the military dictatorship in Brazil were contained in the two books of Prof. Penka Karaivanova (*The Golden Mirage, Farewell to Silence*), who had the opportunity in 1968 to personally observe the student protests in Rio de Janeiro and to interview the world-famous architect Oscar Niemeyer, who was dismissed from the university. Bozhan Yordanov and Slavomir Georgiev wrote about the Brazilian "economic miracle" in their publications, while Iglia Terzieva's dissertation from 1979 and publications by Assoc. Prof. Nikolay Kotev and Dr. Georgi Kolarov were dedicated to the "ultra-leftist" urban and rural guerrilla groups in Latin America. Among the memoirs, the book by Ambassador Boyan Mihaylov "Brazil Unforgettable" stands out, which contains information about the conspiratorial contacts of the legation in Rio de Janeiro with leading figures of the PCB immediately after the establishment of the military dictatorship in 1964. A number of works by native authors examine the specific topic of "Bulgarians in Brazil" (the last book is by Daniel Metodiev from 2024).

The forward to the dissertation is continued with a necessary introduction, which discusses similar continental and specific national historical events and processes in Latin America and Brazil from the first half of the twentieth century to the military coup of March 1964. The comparative analysis is particularly appropriate when studying the modern and contemporary history of Latin America due to similar prerequisites and socio-economic development. The doctoral student does not fail to mention the importance of the University Reform Movement in Córdoba (1918-1920) for the future development of Latin American student organizations and the establishment of youth leaders and intellectuals such as José Carlos Mariátegui, Luis Emilio Recabarren and Julio Mella. A specific form of resistance to the oligarchic latifundist model of capitalism was the "tenantistas" movement in the 1920s, and the overcoming of the sectarian-dogmatic course of the PCB in the mid-1930s was associated with the creation of the National Liberation Alliance (ANL). The construction of the *Estado Novo* from 1937 was influenced by the corporatist principles of Italian fascism and therefore

was initially supported by the pro-fascist "Integralist Action" of Plinio Salgado, later removed due to the establishment of sole rule by Getúlio Vargas. Unlike Chile and Mexico, in Brazil there were no prominent individuals and formations directly associated with Nazi Germany. The notable liberalization of political life in Brazil at the end of the war reflected a general continental trend – in the period 1944-1946, over a hundred communist deputies were elected in 12 Latin American countries, and at the local level over five hundred mayors from the radical left. This policy was interrupted at the beginning of the Cold War after the signing of the Rio Treaty of Mutual Assistance (TIAR) and the announcement of the Washington-imposed Doctrine of Collective Defense of the Western Hemisphere. The introduction also provides valuable data on the complex socio-political situation and the challenges of the liberal-democratic nationalist governments of Kubischek, Cuadros and Goulart (1956-1964).

The first chapter of the study represents an undeniable scientific contribution and examines the essential problems of the dissertation. The prerequisites and mechanisms for the military coup against the democratic government of João Goulart and the main steps and stages in the institutionalization of the military dictatorship in the period 1964-1968 were revealed in detail and objectively. The doctoral student notes that the coup “does not simply overthrow a government, but symbolically and actually interrupted the possibility of realizing an alternative social model” (p. 93). Kremena Dias’s merit is the consistent review of the main doctrinal and administrative acts of the military government and the repressive apparatus. Based on the newly discovered documentary and personal testimonies presented in the three volumes of reports of the National Truth Commission, the methods of kidnapping, detention, interrogations, torture and physical elimination through the practice of “disappearing without a trace” political opponents were impressively described. A separate paragraph systematically examines the parallel forms of political, social and cultural resistance to the dictatorship, with an emphasis on the manifestations of armed struggle by the “new left”. From the peasant leagues of Francisco Juliao and sporadic union protests, through student unrest (part of the general youth rebellious wave in Western Europe, North and South America) to urban and rural guerrilla warfare. In addition to the undeniable influence of the Cuban strategy for continental revolution and Che Guevara’s concept in the famous “message to the Tricontinental” for the creation of “several Vietnams” against North American imperialism, it would be good to also point out the spread and influence of Mao’s ideas and Chinese propaganda for rural guerrilla warfare, which was observed in particular in the Araguaia guerrilla movement and in the views of the radical Communist Party of Brazil (PCdoB), which broke away in 1962 from PCB. In addition to

Frantz Fanon, the concept of "Focism" by Régis Debré (Revolution within the Revolution) is also undoubtedly influential.

The PhD student quite rightly emphasizes the importance and lasting impact of the example of guerrilla leaders and ideologists such as Carlos Marighella and Carlos Lamarca. A separate biographical note is dedicated to Marighella's political activity, as well as a separate article by Kremena Dias. Details of the story of his assassination by the Brazilian secret services in November 1969 were revealed in the following second chapter of the dissertation. It would be good to pay a little more attention to key aspects of his views after his stay in Cuba (August - October 1967). His most famous programmatic work, of course, is the one mentioned in the dissertation "Mini-Manual of the Urban Guerrilla", written in June 1968. A secret CIA report (*Special Report*) of April 24, 1970, analyzed this brochure in detail, and Marighella was described by US intelligence experts as an "outstanding authority" and a charismatic "revolutionary martyr" of the urban guerrilla. Subsequently, his publications were carefully studied in US and Latin American "anti-terrorist" schools of special operations forces. A year after Marighella's assassination, the Cuban magazine "*Pensamiento Crítico*" published several of his unpublished materials, among which stands out an analytical article on the guerrilla war in Brazil, written the day after the assassination of Che Guevara in Bolivia (later published in the magazine "*Tricontinental*" under the title "Diez puntos sobre la guerrilla"). In another of the materials, written in December 1968, Carlos Marighella developed the Cuban concept of the continental revolution, but in his last message, "Letter to the European Revolutionaries" of October 1969, he explicitly emphasized that their struggle was common.

The second chapter of the dissertation is dedicated to the evolution of the policy and institutional instruments of the military dictatorship and the transformation in the methods of anti-dictatorship resistance. Special attention is paid to the parameters, specifics and results of the so-called "Brazilian economic miracle" in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Economic reforms are characterized in the study as a form of "authoritarian modernization" (p. 205). It would be appropriate to mention, as in the case of the military dictatorship of Gen. Pinochet in Chile, the influence of the Chicago monetarist school of Milton Friedman's liberal free market on the Brazilian economic model.

The PhD student rightly emphasizes the importance of Institutional Act No. 5 of December 1968 for the transition to an open repressive system of government, the introduction of strict censorship and the suppression of any opposition manifestations. The conclusion that the military dictatorship was moving from a "reactive to a proactive strategy" with the creation

of networks of secret agents and informants is also successful. (p. 208). One of the specific moments in the repressive policy of the Brazilian special services during this period was their participation in the secret regional operation “Condor” in coordination with the secret services of five other Latin American dictatorial regimes. Of particular importance was the adoption in May 1976 of the collective secret program “Theseus” for multilateral cooperation in the kidnapping and physical removal of political opponents. Over 50,000 pages of secret American documents revealed in 2018-2020 show the scale of this program and partially confirm the hypothesis of coordinated violent actions against the former Brazilian president in exile João Goulart. At the same time, the decline and collapse of the armed guerrilla resistance in the early 1970s could also be explained by the change in the tactical line of the Cuban leadership, indirectly hinted at in Fidel Castro's self-critical report of July 26, 1970.

The third chapter also has a number of contributing moments in the systematized recreation of the long process of “controlled democratization” and “political opening”. A significant part of the historical analysis is devoted to the emergence of a new type of protest social movements – a kind of “alternative to authoritarian communism and institutional reformism” (p. 290).

The tendency to expand public anti-dictatorship manifestations and the formation of new, broader opposition alliances in Brazil was also influenced by the radicalization of representatives of the Catholic Church in the country, especially among the Dominican Order. Since this is an extremely specific phenomenon in the largest Catholic country, perhaps more attention should be paid to the ideological postulates of “liberation theology”, expressed in publications by its prominent representatives such as Leonardo Boff and Frei Betto. It is also significant that the Brazilian media has reflected the sharp propaganda campaign about the alleged “Bulgarian connection” in the attack on Pope John Paul II in a completely balanced and peripheral manner.

When it comes to the foreign policy concepts and practice of the military dictatorship, its main manifestations, as Kremena Dias points out, were close cooperation with the USA and declared firm “anti-communism”, but also consistent nationalism. Unlike the policy of other right-wing military dictatorships in Latin America (Chile, Uruguay, Paraguay), even after the coup, Brazilian authorities sought to maintain normal contacts with the USSR and the countries of Eastern Europe based on the doctrine of “ecumenical pragmatism.” This is evidenced by a number of specific facts in Bulgarian-Brazilian relations under the conditions of military dictatorship in Brazil. For example, as early as 1970, the Bulgarian government decided to send

its trade delegation to Brazil, and in the following years a serious upward increase in bilateral trade turnover was observed. In 1974, during the administration of President Gen. Ernesto Geisel, the rank of diplomatic missions in both countries was raised from legations to embassies. Sofia successively sent official state delegations on the occasion of the inaugurations of Brazilian presidents in 1974, 1979 and 1985. It reached the telling fact that in 1981 the BZNS (ANU) party established direct contacts with the two official parties in Brazil – the ruling Social Democratic Party (PDS, former ARENA) and the opposition liberal party Brazilian Democratic Movement (PMDB) and shortly after with the center-left Democratic Workers' Party (PDT) of Leonel Brizola. During the period 1981-1984, parliamentary delegations were exchanged. At the same time, however, the Bulgarian leadership repeatedly provided material and moral support to the PCB. When in 1969 a dozen Brazilian student activists illegally left Brazil and arrived in Bulgaria, the Bulgarian political leadership approved a decision to admit them to Bulgarian universities. Direct political contacts with the Workers' Party (PT) of Luiz Ignacio Lula da Silva, formed in 1980, were established in 1987, and the first official PT delegation visited Sofia in August 1990.

The conclusion of the dissertation (pp. 375-382) provides a synthesized summary of the different stages and "phases" of the "multi-layered" anti-dictatorship resistance during the military regime in Brazil (1964-1985). The 28-page abstract of the dissertation objectively reflects the structure, main content and conclusions of the study. I agree with the five scientific contributions formulated by the doctoral student. Five articles were published on the topic of the dissertation in the period 2020-2023, and two more were accepted for publication, which is new evidence of the originality of the author's theses and the interest shown in the researched problematic issues through their popularization among the Bulgarian professional audience.

In conclusion, I would like to express my satisfaction with the serious and thorough attitude of the PhD student and her ability to discover, systematize and interpret the essential interconnected events and phenomena on the researched topics. The significant number of scientific and reference literature and memoirs used, which are mentioned and analyzed for the first time in a Bulgarian scientific work, enhances the original nature of the work. The introduction of authentic archival sources from the Brazilian archives and the conduct of personal interviews with participants in the described events unconditionally confirm the contribution of the work. Although it is about the history of a single Latin American country, the essential topics examined, such as the implementation of a violent change of power through a military coup, the subsequent establishment of a cruel repressive system with the physical

elimination and "disappearance without a trace" of political opponents, the various forms and evolution of anti-dictatorship resistance, as well as the prolonged but unalternative and peaceful transition to parliamentary democracy, go beyond the historical framework of a single country and represent a valuable historical experience in contemporary world social history. The recommendations made in the review are intended primarily to assist the doctoral student in her future work on the research topic, which I consider very necessary and relevant.

The above gives me reason to make a reasoned conclusion that the dissertation in question fully meets the necessary requirements and criteria for acquiring the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in accordance with the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for its implementation. Given this, I will vote "yes" and I call on the esteemed members of the scientific jury to also cast their vote for awarding Kremena Georgieva Dias the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in the field of higher education "Humanities", professional direction 2.2. "History and Archaeology" (New and most recent general history - Contemporary history).

Member of the scientific jury:

(Prof. Dr. Jordan Baev)

05. 02. 2026