

OPINION

by Assoc. Prof., Dr. **Silviya Nikolova Aleksandrova**,
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on the thesis

**“The Evolution of Resistance and Opposition Movements against the Military
Dictatorship in Brazil, 1964 -1985”**

presented for the awarding of the educational and scientific degree **“Doctor”
(PhD)** in the field of higher education: **2. Humanities**; professional field: **2.2
History and Archeology (Modern and Contemporary World History -
Contemporary History)**

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Data about the PhD student and the PhD program

Kremena Georgieva Kostadinova-Dias Kremena is a graduate of Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski“. From 2007 to 2011 she studied Portuguese Philology at the Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology, where she obtained a Bachelor's degree. In 2016, Ms. Dias was enrolled in the MA program “Crises, Conflicts and Diplomacy in World Politics 16th -21st cc” of the Faculty of History of Sofia University. She completed her studies in the program with a MA degree in 2018. From February 1, 2020 to February 1, 2023, she was a full-time PhD student

in the doctoral program "Modern and Contemporary History (Contemporary History)" at the Department of Modern and Contemporary History of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" with doctoral thesis on "The Evolution of Resistance and Opposition Movements against the Military Dictatorship in Brazil - 1964-1985" and a research advisor Assoc. Prof., Dr. Gergana Aleksieva. From 2014 to 2022, Ms. Dias was an honorarium lecturer at the Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology of SU. She also worked as a consular officer at the Brazilian Embassy in Sofia.

As a doctoral student Kremena Dias has successfully passed all the exams required by the Regulations for obtaining the scientific degree "Doctor" and has fulfilled all the tasks and commitments stipulated in her individual study and research plan. On December 2, 2025 the dissertation text was discussed at a meeting of the Department of Modern and Contemporary History and directed for public defense (Protocol №3/25.12.2025).

K. Dias is fluent in Portuguese, English and Spanish.

Data and opinion about the dissertation, the abstract and the scientific publications

The doctoral thesis is related to one of the most dramatic and crisis-ridden periods in Brazil's contemporary history—the period of military dictatorship in the country from 1964 to 1985. The study of the emergence and evolution, the successes and failures of the opposition and the active resistance against the dictatorial regime in Brazil over two decades, is an ambitious scientific undertaking, for which I congratulate both the doctoral candidate and her supervisor.

The overall scope of the dissertation is 402 standard pages (A4 format), of which the actual exposition covers 384 pages, while the remaining pages are of an auxiliary nature. Structurally the dissertation is well balanced and follows the established academic standard for doctoral theses in History: an introduction, three

chapters, and a conclusion, supplemented by a bibliography and appendices.

The methodological section of the Introduction sets out the thesis, aims, and research tasks, as well as the object and subject of the study. The chronological framework of the dissertation (1964–1985) is appropriately defined, as it encompasses a complete and coherent historical cycle in which the dismantling of democratic governance, the restriction of civil liberties, and the repressive apparatus of the military regime provided both the conditions and the impetus for the emergence and evolution of various forms of resistance. The author further proposes an internal periodization consisting of three stages (phases, p. 6): 1964–1968, 1968–1977, and 1977–1985.

Without rejecting this internal periodization, I believe the study should acknowledge that this topic remains debated in the historiography. In the Introduction (p. 6) and in the title of Chapter Two, the author defines the period from 1964 to 1977 as the “Lead Years.” While the lower chronological boundary is generally undisputed in the literature, the upper boundary is not; in my view, Ms. Dias should therefore indicate alternative interpretations. This is particularly important because the table of contents, the Introduction, and the title of Chapter Three (p. 257) identify 1977–1985 as the third period under analysis, whereas the description of the dissertation’s structure (p. 12) and the abstract (p. 7) indicate 1974 as the lower chronological boundary of Chapter Three.

The topic of the dissertation is highly promising in terms of its potential for interdisciplinary research and the application of a multi-method research and analytical framework, as reflected in the research methods outlined on p. 7. The Introduction also presents an overview of the sources consulted and a concise historiographical review, including a discussion of three principal theoretical currents within the “historiographical debate” (p. 11). The author outlines the scientific contributions of the thesis on p. 13.

The structural framework of the Introduction includes an overview of the political situation on the continent (presumably referring to South America) and an account of the conditions that led to the military dictatorship in Brazil. The two sections address, respectively, the broader context of Latin America and the specific political developments and challenges in Brazil from the early 1930s to the early 1960s. Both parts provide a wealth of information - facts, events, individuals, parties, and political movements - which testifies to the author's considerable effort in working with and translating a large body of sources (a strength evident throughout the dissertation).

At the same time, the Introduction tends to read as somewhat diffuse, lacking a clearly structured analytical framework that would help orient the reader within this abundance of material, foreground the most significant processes and events, and clarify their relevance to the central research question of the dissertation.

The author convincingly demonstrates that there was no monolithic anti-Goulart front within the Brazilian army prior to the 1964 coup, showing that opposition to the president was neither unified nor unanimous. Kremena Dias also deserves commendation for consistently situating developments in Brazil within a broader regional context, persuasively arguing that the country's departure from democratic governance between 1964 and 1985 reflected not only domestic dynamics but also wider Latin American trends.

However, certain assertions are less convincing. For example, the statement on p. 35 that "for thirty years, populism has been the dominant form of nationalism" lacks chronological precision. It is unclear which three decades are intended (presumably 1930–1964); yet even within that timeframe, periods such as the presidency of Eurico Dutra or the administration of Juscelino Kubitschek can hardly be characterized as populist without further qualification. Even setting this aside, the characterization of populism as a "dominant variant of nationalism" strikes me as

conceptually problematic. It is also noteworthy that several footnotes contain imprecise and, in some cases, potentially misleading references to the sources cited - an issue of particular concern given that few Bulgarian historians, who have specialized expertise in this field, possess also fluency in Portuguese. That's why the Introduction appears to rely more on indirect presentation of existing analyses and summaries than on the author's own interpretation and critical engagement, which would contribute to a clearer, more concise, and analytically focused exposition.

The main body of the dissertation, structured in three chapters, offers a wealth of material: it examines the establishment of the military dictatorship and the initial manifestations of opposition; the mechanisms of repression and the evolution of resistance during the so-called "Lead Years"; the particular features of the Brazilian "economic miracle" and its connection to the intensification and changing forms of opposition to the dictatorial model of governance; and the broader economic, political, ideological, and socio-cultural transformations that contributed to the regime's gradual erosion and eventual collapse.

The text adequately reflects the dynamics of the resistance across different phases of the regime, highlighting both the fragmentation and the difficulties of coordinated democratic action, as well as the role and development of the principal centers and leaders of opposition. I find the interdisciplinary approach adopted in Chapter Three particularly valuable, especially the discussion of the potential of culture, in its various forms, to inspire and mobilize collective action for political change. Following the extensive criticism of the role and support of the United States in the establishment of the military dictatorship in Brazil, I expected to see some consideration of the position of the USSR - given that the period under examination unfolds within the broader context of the global Cold War. No such analysis was provided. More generally, the dissertation would benefit from a more sustained examination of the role of external factors in the erosion and eventual collapse of the

dictatorship in Brazil.

The conclusion effectively synthesizes the empirical and analytical material presented in the dissertation and clearly articulates its principal findings and overall conclusions.

Remarks and recommendations

Given that the dissertation addresses a topic that is relatively unfamiliar in Bulgaria, it is essential that the names of individuals, parties, movements, organizations, coalitions, institutions, newspapers, and similar entities be provided, at least on first mention, both in Bulgarian and in the original Portuguese. This practice not only respects the reader but also aligns with the academic standards for this type of research.

Additionally, the dissertation should include a comprehensive list of abbreviations, which is currently missing. Such a list would greatly facilitate tracking the numerous acronyms and abbreviations that are central to the study of the Brazilian military dictatorship and the opposition to it. Including original Portuguese names and titles, along with an alphabetical list of abbreviations, would help prevent confusion arising from the combination of full names introduced only in Bulgarian with abbreviations or acronyms rendered according to the original Portuguese.

The need for a list of abbreviations is further underscored by instances in the text where abbreviations are introduced without first providing the full name, leaving the reader to infer their meaning (for example, ДОИ-КОДИ on p. 97, also rendered as ДОИ-Коди on other pages, and ДОПС on p. 122). Additional inaccuracies could have been avoided through adherence to academic standards. For instance, on p. 127, the „Colina group“ is incorrectly translated as the „Committee for the Liberation of National Interests,“ when in fact it is an acronym (COLINA or CoLiNa) for „Comando de Libertação Nacional“.

The interpretative literature cited by the author is almost exclusively in

Portuguese, with the exception of six publications by colleagues from Sofia University. In my view, engagement with research in English (which Ms. Dias herself uses) would substantially enrich both the historiographical overview and the analytical treatment of the topic. Three illustrative examples of such works include: Bryan Pitts, *Until the Storm Passes: Politicians, Democracy, and the Demise of Brazil's Military Dictatorship* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2023); Perry Anderson, *Brazil Apart: 1964–2019* (London and New York: Verso, 2019); and James N. Green, *We Cannot Remain Silent: Opposition to the Brazilian Military Dictatorship in the United States* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010).

Furthermore, with the exception of two publications by G. Alexieva and B. Miteva, the dissertation largely omits references to research published in specialized academic journals. Many of these sources are now readily accessible online and could significantly enrich the analysis by presenting a wider range of perspectives on the issues under study. As an example, Werner Baer's publications in English on the Brazilian "economic miracle" demonstrate the value of incorporating journal-based scholarship. It is also likely that numerous additional articles relevant to the dissertation's topic are available in Portuguese, which could further strengthen the work's depth and context.

Even if the author approaches the topic from a perspective that is currently dominant in our region - left-liberal, and at times openly leftist - Ms. Dias could nevertheless have included, at least in the historiographical overview, references to Soviet and Russian scholarship. For many years, the contemporary (i.e. 20th-century) development of Latin American countries occupied a significant place in the Soviet/Russian body of research, which could have provided additional context and analytical depth for the dissertation.

I should say that I have serious reservations regarding the author's compliance

with academic standards in citing and bibliographically describing the sources used, both primary and secondary. The errors that can be found create the impression that the doctoral student did not fully engage with the cited literature as a working source.

The dissertation draws on some doctoral theses which have not been published as books and should provide them with bibliographical descriptions appropriate for this type of secondary source. The same requirement for proper citation applies to all sources—both documentary and interpretative—available in PDF format as digital reproductions of printed books. Even when the digital copies retain the original pagination, many references and citations do not indicate specific pages and fail to meet academic standards for a doctoral dissertation by preventing verification of the accuracy of the citations. Another issue concerns the work of Elio Gaspari, which is frequently cited throughout the dissertation. It is presented as a five-volume monograph, with the titles of the individual volumes provided in a footnote. However, both in the footnotes and in the bibliography (p. 400), the provided publication year of each and every volume of Gaspari's work is entirely incorrect.

Jacob Gorender's *Combate nas trevas*, cited on pages 14, 44, 124, 125 ... 286 and listed in the bibliography (p. 400), is given the publication year 1984; however, the first edition of the book was actually published in 1987. Likewise, Jorge Ferreira's *1964: O Governo do João Goulart: As lutas sociais no Brasil*, cited on pp. 10, 51, 52, 53, 56, 64 ... 98 and listed on p. 399, contains omissions in its bibliographical description and the year of publication is listed as 2010, whereas the first edition appeared only in 2014.

In addition to the issues noted regarding the description of interpretative works, there is, in my view, a more serious problem concerning the citation of primary sources, which form the foundation of the research and original contribution of the dissertation. Archival documents from the National Archives of Brazil in Rio de Janeiro are frequently cited (e.g., footnotes 183 and 184, p. 76; footnote 185, p.

77; footnote 194, p. 79; footnote 280, p. 117 ... footnote 546, p. 240, among many others). However, the method of citation does not adhere to established archival and academic standards. An illustrative example of problematic citation is footnote 446 on p. 195: "*Declaração do diretor do Banco Central sobre a redução da taxa de juros, 15 de setembro de 1966 – ERJ/6885231-CBN-09 – Arquivo Nacional – Governo Federal – Rio de Janeiro.*" The footnote provides the title and date of the document, followed by a code (presumably an internal identifier or inventory number). However, this does not substitute for a proper academic or archival citation format, which should reflect the standard descriptive elements required for archival materials, including those from the Brazilian National Archives. Furthermore, the addition of "Governo Federal" in this and similar notes is both conceptually inaccurate - since the archive contains multiple collections beyond federal holdings - and unnecessary, as the designation "Arquivo Nacional" already implicitly refers to the federal level.

Numerous inaccuracies and errors appear in the citation of media publications used as source material, particularly in references to the newspapers *Jornal do Brasil* and *Correio da Manhã*. Due to the constraints of this "Opinion" format, it is not possible to list all of these inaccuracies here, although they have been duly recorded. The topic of the dissertation offers numerous opportunities to use press publications as primary sources to support the author's arguments. However, instead of fully exploiting these sources, the author frequently discusses events reported in the press indirectly, relying on interpretations provided in secondary literature rather than engaging directly with the primary materials (see, for example, note 360 on p. 147). Similarly, on p. 151, Carlos Eitor Coni's contributions to *Correio da Manhã* are analyzed, yet despite the availability of the newspaper's digital archive, Dias does not cite any specific articles.

There are passages in the dissertation where references to primary sources,

upon verification, do not appear to substantiate the specific claims attributed to them with sufficient accuracy. Frequently, the text discusses or comments on a primary source, yet the corresponding footnote provides only a link to a general digital platform or collection rather than to the specific document itself. Such an approach fails to meet the fundamental requirement that scientific citations provide unambiguous identification and localization of the documents used, making source verification difficult. Although most cited sources are relevant to the topic, the inaccuracies, omissions, and inconsistencies in the citations, as well as deviations from standard academic citation practices, hinder verification and raise questions about the extent of the author's independent engagement with the primary source material underpinning the dissertation.

I have reservations about another aspect of Ms. Dias's research. On p. 9, she cites seven interviews conducted with contemporaries and participants in the events under study as part of the dissertation's source base and for critical comparison of evidence. Such primary sources could constitute a significant scientific contribution to the thesis, and I was initially prepared to acknowledge this. However, the appendices (Nos. 3–8) related to these interviews present two problems: first, they are only six in number - no appendix appears to correspond to the interview with José Carlos Dias, whose name is listed on p. 9; second, and more importantly, they do not contain the interview texts themselves - no transcriptions, recordings, or references to archives where they are stored - only brief biographical notes about the interviewees.

The absence of properly documented interview texts undermines their value as primary sources, since it prevents verification of authenticity and comparison of the author's interpretations with the original material. References to these appendices often provide only general statements or brief information about events, leaving the interviewees' specific roles or retrospective assessments unclear. For these reasons,

Appendices 3–8 do not meaningfully contribute to clarifying the dissertation topic and, in my view, are superfluous. Likewise, I find no compelling reason to include Appendices 1 and 2, which contain biographical data on Carlos Marighela and Carlos Lamarca, as sufficient information about them is already provided in the main text.

The dissertation **abstract** meets both academic and legal requirements, providing an accurate summary of the content, key conclusions, scientific contributions, and relevant publications associated with the doctoral research. Kremena Kostadinova-Dias has five **publications** already issued and two accepted for publication on the dissertation topic, fulfilling the legal requirements for the defense of a doctoral dissertation.

Conclusion

K. Dias's PhD thesis is original and meets the requirements of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act (DASRBA), the Regulations for the Implementation of the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act and the Regulations on the Terms and Conditions for Acquiring Scientific Degrees and Holding Academic Positions at SU "St. Kliment Ohridski". My critical remarks and recommendations are not intended to diminish the value of the dissertation. I recognize the main scientific contribution of the PhD thesis, as stated in the abstract, as the first comprehensive and systematic study of resistance to the Brazilian military dictatorship in Bulgarian historiography. A truly extensive body of factual and historiographical material has been processed, including studies by Brazilian authors that are largely unknown to the Bulgarian academic audience. The text effectively combines empirical and factual data with conceptual analysis. I also consider Ms. Dias's ability to navigate complex foreign-language material in an interdisciplinary academic study to be a significant scholarly achievement.

My reservations, however, relate to the impression that the author has not engaged sufficiently with archival and documentary sources, giving the dissertation a somewhat compilatory character rather than one grounded strictly in original research. I hope that, during the public defense, the doctoral candidate will address and clarify these reservations. I therefore support the awarding to our colleague Kremena Georgieva Kostadinova-Dias of the educational and scientific degree of **“Doctor”** in in the field of higher education: 2. Humanities; professional field: 2.2 History and Archeology (Modern and Contemporary World History - Contemporary History).

15 February 2025

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(Assos. Prof., Dr. S. Aleksandrova)