**OPINION**

**By Assoc. Prof. Dr. Todor Radev (Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv)**

**for Denis Bogomilov Ivanov's dissertation on the subject**

**IVAN DRASOV – THE UNKNOWN AND UNDERESTIMATED ACTOR OF THE BULGARIAN NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENT**

**(research supervisor Prof. Dr. Plamen Mitev)**

**for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "DOCTOR"**

**in professional direction 2. 2. History and archeology (doctoral program "History of Bulgaria" - History of the Bulgarian Renaissance)**

The lengthy dissertation work (501 pages) presented by Denis Ivanov is dedicated to the revival period of Ivan Drasov's life and socio-political activity. The study consists of an introduction, four chapters (containing multiple paragraphs and sub-paragraphs), a conclusion and a bibliography. The structure is based on a skillful combination of problem-thematic and chronological approaches.

The introduction (pp. 5 – 22) is written in a classic style for academic historiography. In it, the doctoral student convincingly argues the title of the dissertation. Among the factors that directed him to the topic is the contradiction between an active personal role in the Bulgarian liberation movement during the "committee decade" and the ambiguous historiographical assessments of the person under study. The formulated problem has a high degree of scientific relevance due to the contrasting direct organizational and political contacts of Ivan Drasov with Vasil Levski, Hristo Botev, Lyuben Karavelov and other prominent representatives of the revolutionary direction in the Bulgarian liberation movement in the 1970s, who were heroized in the post-liberation national memory. XIX century. The author has made a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the historiographic achievements, including in his overview publications with unknown authorship. A complete review and analysis of the historical sources on the subject is presented, with an emphasis on new archival documents searched by him and introduced into scientific circulation. The described structure of Ivan Drasov's personal archive stored in the State Archives - Varna makes a strong impression (p. 18 - 19). From this archival fund, the author analyzed over 400 documents, a large part of which remained unknown or insufficiently studied by historical science for a long time. In this situation, the corrections of numerous information stated in the introductory part and realized in the presentation in the collection dedicated to Ivan Drasov from the documentary series "The Archives Speak" (Ivan Drasov in the Bulgarian National Revolutionary Movement 1871 - 1877. Documentary collection. Varna, 2007) are completely legitimate.

In the first chapter (p. 23 – 117), dealing with the life and socio-political activity of Ivan Drasov until the summer of 1872, the factors that made him a significant public figure in Lovech are highlighted. In this part of the dissertation, the paragraph presenting the role of Ivan Drasov in the committee work stands out. In addition to a comprehensive and academically sound biographical analysis, Denis Ivanov demonstrates unobtrusively, but at the same time boldly and reasonedly, his ambition to formulate his opinion on knotty and insufficiently resolved problems by historical science through the prism of the studied person. Examples in this regard are: the chronological specification of the first meeting of Ivan Drasov with Vasil Levski, the beginning of the CRK in Lovech, the formation of the "CBRC in Bulgaria" and the role of Drasov in the two committee structures, which are often not distinguished in the historical literature devoted to of the Internal Revolutionary Organization.

The second chapter (p. 118 – 256) is devoted to the life and work of Ivan Drasov during the first period of his emigrant years (September 1872 – June 1875). The emphasis is naturally placed on his studies in the Czech Republic, for which new source material sought by the author has been introduced into scientific circulation. The political activity of the studied person among the Bulgarian emigrant community is highlighted, including his attempts to organize a committee of Bulgarian youth studying in the Czech Republic (p. 134 – 148). This is a scholarly contribution by a PhD student based entirely on newly discovered archival documents. Special attention deserves the open biography of Giuseppe Mazzini, which Ivan Drasov translated from Czech (Karel Tuma's book "Apostle of Freedom", published in 1873) into Bulgarian, but his attempts to publish it in Bucharest failed due to the Botev-Karavelov conflict ( pp. 212 – 216). In this context, another similar undertaking known to specialized historiography has been analyzed - the book "Sofia's Adventure" (pp. 217 - 221), which remains in archival and unfinished form, the impetus for which came from Hristo Botev due to the immediate acquaintance and cooperation of Ivan Drasov with Vasil Levski and a large part of the investigated and convicted committee officials after the Arabakonash affair.

The extensive third chapter (p. 257 – 413) deals with the active revolutionary and journalistic activities of Ivan Drasov during the Eastern Crisis (1875 – 1878). Analyzed on a broad source basis, the actions of the researched person during the conflict between Hristo Botev and Lyuben Karavelov, during the creation of the BRK, during the unsuccessful attempt at an uprising in Bulgaria in 1875, are based on the authoritative research of Prof. Krumka Sharova and Prof. Plaven Mitev, but the doctoral student also presents his own original reading of the historical sources. The argued innovative approach stands out both in the analysis of the causes of the Botev - Drasov conflict (pp. 332 - 337) and in the described role of Ivan Drasov (pp. 337 - 345) in the so-called "Brail Meeting" of March 6, 1876 d. A scientific contribution of a high degree is the analytical presentation of the journalistic activity of the researched person during the publication (together with Todor Peev and Svetoslav Milarov) of the magazine "Vazrazhdane" in the summer and autumn of 1876 in Braila. Aspects of the periodical's political ideas are the subject of authoritative studies by Prof. Evlogi Buzhashki and Associate Professor Plamen Bozhinov, but Denis Ivanov presents not only Ivan Drasov's contribution to the field of political journalism, but also an original comprehensive scientific view of the creation, development and the end of the "Vazrazhdane" village against the background of the state of the Bulgarian liberation movement after the April Uprising (p. 353 - 393).

The fourth chapter, entitled "Ivan Drasov and the memory of the Bulgarian national liberation movement" (p. 414 - 450) is a scientific contribution to both historical science and other humanities researching the formation of collective memory about the past.

With a view to the possible publication of the dissertation work, some recommendations can be addressed to Denis Ivanov. The date August 14, 1872, related to the revolutionary terror in Lovech applied by Vasil Levski himself, is not the holiday dedicated to St. Mother of God. The church holiday "Assumption" or the so-called "Great Virgin" is celebrated the next day - September 15. The opinion that Ivan Drasov's decision to emigrate in August 1872 was taken suddenly partly because of his strong desire to continue his education abroad seems insufficiently convincing. It seems impossible that he was not influenced by the negative effects of the revolutionary terror and the crisis tendencies in the development of the Internal Revolutionary Organization that took shape in the summer of 1872, including a conflict between some committee members from Lovech and Vasil Levski. Ivan Drasov's emigrant commitment to the development of the church-national movement in the Lovech-centered diocese after the establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate should be approached more critically, taking into account the opposite point of view - in the 1970s, bishops in Lovech are authoritative church figures such as Hilarion Lovchanski and the future Exarch Joseph.

The scientific value of the dissertation work is obvious. The text is clear, concise, grammatically disciplined and at an outstanding academic level. The scientific apparatus is comprehensive and precise. Here is a valuable historical study - not only as a scholarly revival biography of Ivan Drasov, but also as a contemporary historiographical look at key issues of our liberation movement during the "committee decade". The abstract correctly reflects the goals and scientific contributions of the dissertation. The research is original, there are no elements of plagiarism. A strong impression is made by the fact that in connection with the topic of the dissertation, Denis Ivanov has published 12 articles in authoritative scientific publications, and his total scientific publications to date are 17. He has participated in 20 scientific forums and conferences in a national and international format. The qualities of a researcher acquired under the guidance of the scientific supervisor under Denis Ivanov are complemented by discipline and outstanding work ability. He is among the few full-time PhD students completing his studies exactly within the specified time frame. The procedure strictly meets the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for its application.

In conclusion, I declare that I will confidently vote positively, appealing to the honorable Scientific Jury to award Denis Bogomilov Ivanov the scientific and educational degree "DOCTOR" in professional direction 2. 2. History and archaeology.

Plovdiv, April 18, 2024

 Member of the Scientific Jury:

 Associate Professor Dr. Todor Radev