

REVIEW

by Prof. Dr. Roumiana Il. Preshlenova
for the dissertation of Maria Sashkova Valkova
on the topic "Andrey Toshev - statesman, diplomat, politician",
Faculty of History of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"
with academic supervisor Prof. DSc Veselin Yanchev
for awarding the educational and scientific degree "doctor" (PhD)

The chosen topic of the dissertation is significant and appropriate for a dissertation. Andrey Toshev is the author not only of insightful diplomatic reports and analyses at the beginning of the 20th century, but also of books about Macedonia, the Balkan Wars and the First World War. These publications are source for detailed studies of diplomatic shuttles between the Balkan countries, between them and the Great Powers at the turn of the century through the eyes of an erudite professional. This allows to present an important period of the Bulgarian history in the context of international relations through his personality. The chosen topic has not been studied in its entirety in Bulgarian historiography, which makes its research not only justified, but also significant. The structure consisting of an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion and a bibliography allows for its successful development.

The research is built on a chronological principle. The dissertation is based on unpublished archival documents from Bulgarian archives, press materials, memories and diaries, as well as scholarly publications.

The PhD student benefits from the fact that Andrey Toshev, the subject of the dissertation, is the author of six popular monographs on his life and work, which allows her to compare the diplomatic correspondence with his later memories, analyses, and summaries. This offers an opportunity to compare them with other studies to highlight Andrey

Toshev's personal assessments and biases. In some places, she compares his diplomatic reports with his later publication on the Balkan Wars. The dissertation discovers many manifestations of diplomatic and political foresight on the part of Andrey Toshev. For example, his view on the role of political and cultural propaganda abroad in defence of the Bulgarian cause in the spring of 1913, when a rift between the former allies in the Balkans was brewing, is striking. The author also points out his anticipation of an impending armed conflict in the summer of 1914, given the bellicose sentiments in Austria-Hungary against Serbia and his consistent position of neutrality for Bulgaria "until the last possible moment", his later insistence that Northern Dobrudza should be reserved for Bulgaria, etc.

In general, the PhD student manages to outline the active role of Andrey Toshev as a commercial agent in Bitola and a Bulgarian diplomatic representative in Cetinje, Athens, Belgrade, Constantinople, Vienna and Bern. During this activity she shows that the protection of his compatriots in Macedonia against Turkish arbitrariness, Greek and Serbian propaganda and terror, the defence of Bulgarian national interests are not just his routine duties, but a cause. She presents him as a diplomat who has proven his qualities in critical situations. The dissertation repeatedly shows his impeccable professionalism when he strictly implements the directives of the Bulgarian governments, even though they are in complete contradiction to his personal views.

The PhD student traces how, during his diplomatic career, Andrey Toshev formed out and established himself as a politician, ready later to lead the government of the state, albeit for a short time. The seven-month rule of the non-party ministerial council he led is aptly presented in the context of the crisis of parliamentarianism in Bulgaria after the Nineteenth-May-coup of 1934, the efforts to isolate military circles as a political factor and the increasing role of Tsar Boris III in the political life of the country.

In accordance with the formulated topic of the dissertation, the author pays attention mainly to the diplomatic, political, and public

activities of Andrey Toshev. His journalistic, scholarly, and teaching activities are mentioned rather for completeness without being explored in depth.

The dissertation is written in an engaging and accessible way for non-professionals, despite the presence of some spelling errors, punctuation errors, which should be edited before the eventual publication of the research.

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