

REPORT

On the thesis of Stoyan Dimitrov Stoyanov
“Bulgarian-Polish political relations (1945–1989)”,
submitted for the defence of the academic degree PhD
by professional field 2.2. History and archeology,
scientific specialty: Contemporary Bulgarian history

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The thesis of Stoyan Stoyanov, full-time PhD student at the Department of History of Bulgaria at the IF, on the topic “Bulgarian-Polish political relations (1945–1989)” is 341 pages, of which 333 pages consist of text and 10 pages of photographs in the form of appendix. The exposition is divided into a prelude, an introduction, four chapters and a conclusion, which invariably follow the chronological principle of presenting the material. The relevant bibliography is referenced at the end.

There is no monographic research on the here proposed topic in historiography. Other research dealing with relations between the two countries during the Cold War usually look at specific significant events in Polish history (such as the Polish crisis of 1980–1981 and the creation of Polish trade union “Solidarity”) or place these relations within the frame of the Eastern Bloc. This is perfectly understandable, since everything that is happening in the socialist camp during most of its existence is under Moscow's watchful eye, and its members have relatively little room to express any independence, including in their relations with each other. Thus, the narrowing of the scope of these relations in the context of political relations alone further dooms the thesis to include a thorough description of the dozen meetings between the party-government delegations of the two countries, which exchange visits over the years, and of some of the lower-level contacts – between the Ministries of Interior and Foreign Affairs of the two countries, for example. These are the relevant points on the topic of the bilateral relations, which the PhD student accompanied with detailed explanations of the development of each country.

The introduction quite briefly states the main goal of the thesis – “monitoring in political context” of the “intensive contacts” between the two countries in the researched period; the chronological framework – “from the end of World War II to the end of the socialist regime in both countries”; as well as the research methods – “historical and comparative analysis” with the applying of a “chronological approach”. Only in the abstract, we find a more adequate for this type of thesis description of the relevance of the topic, the tasks and the objects of the research.

As for the historiographical review, I would like to draw attention to some omissions made. One such example are the materials from the Polish-Bulgarian scientific conference “Independence Gained: Polish and Bulgarian Perspectives”, organized by the Institute for

Historical Research at BAS together with the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Bulgaria and the Polish Institute in Sofia, dedicated to the 100th anniversary of independence of Poland and the establishment of diplomatic relations between Bulgaria and Poland, published as Volume 35 of the IHS Notices. Another example is the work of Veslav Valkevich “Bulgaria. Recent Political History” (Bulgaria. Dzieje polityczne najnowsze), published in 2018, and Biser Petrov’s book “Bulgaria and the New Slavic Movement 1941–1948” (2019), the only monographic study in Bulgarian historiography dedicated to the consolidation of the Slavic in the years during and after the end of World War II.

In regards to the exposition itself, I believe that the description of the facts seriously dominates over the actual analysis of the events. The author often “hides” behind quotes without making the necessary comments, explanations and analyzes in regards to them.

The conclusions made by the PhD student, while correct on their own, would require a lot of imagination in order to be described as contributing, insofar as they do not make notice of something that is not yet known to historical science. However, given the modestly worded goals in the beginning of the theses that I have already mentioned, the conclusion could also not be any different.

Despite the criticisms listed so far, there are certain formal grounds for awarding the academic degree PhD to the author of the thesis: he thoroughly read the archives, studied much of the available literature and met the goals stated. Another formality is completed – the PhD student has met the requirement for three publications on the topic of the thesis. Therefore, despite my serious criticisms to the thesis presented by Stoyan Dimitrov Stoyanov and certain disagreements with the wording of the topic of the dissertation and the goals pursued by the PhD student in its development, I still believe there are grounds for awarding the scientific degree PhD.

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