

REVIEW

By Associate Professor PhD Asya Lazarova Atanasova
Episkop Konstantin Preslavski Shumen University, History and Archaeology Department

Regarding: scientific work of **Stefan Petrov Petrov**
For awarding the educational and scientific degree of Doctor
St. Kliment Ohridski Sofia University
New and Contemporary History Department
Scientific area: 2. Humanities
Professional line: 2.2. History and Archaeology (New and Contemporary General History – History of Russia)
Scientific adviser: **Associate Professor PhD Aleksander Sivilov**

Subject of the scientific work: *The Russian empire and the anti-war movements in the years of World War I*

PhD Student's details:

Stefan Petrov Petrov is a full-time doctoral student at New and Contemporary History Department at Sofia University. He holds a bachelor's degree in Journalism and in 2018 successfully defended a master thesis with subject Anti-War Movements in The European Central Powers Countries in The Years of World War I.

The Subject: Russian Empire and the *Anti-War Movements in the Years of World War I* and the subject of the war, as the PhD student refers, is very topical nowadays in the world and particularly in Russia.

Chronological scope:

The chronological scope chosen is logical in the context of the specified goals and objectives of the topic covered. The beginning is the outbreak of World War I and Russia's participation in it. The February Revolution of 1917 and the fall of the monarchy are chosen as the end of the period but not the end of the war or Russia's exit of the war.

Sources and technical parameters:

The scientific work consists of 348 pages; there is an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion and bibliography. The bibliography includes 111 titles of historical researches, 46 journals and memoirs. The main sources for the dissertation come from the Central State Archives as well as previously published collections of documents and materials.

Historical and comparative analyses were mainly used for the dissertation to be written.

Author theses:

The introduction is written entirely according to the requirements for this type of work. The goals and objectives that Stefan Petrov set in writing the dissertation are clearly formulated. The choice of the topic, its topicality, and why these chronological limits were chosen are justified. Contributions to the dissertation are indicated the way the author sees them.

In Chapter One: *The Ruling Power as a Factor for the Emergence of Anti-war Sentiment*, the doctoral student traces the atmosphere in the royal family, who, under the influence of its own problems and outside interference, increasingly began to lose the confidence not only of the citizens but of the army, too. Emphasis falls on the factors that made the autocracy the main source of the emergence of anti-war sentiment among the people and the army; the mysticism, the lack of a clear reason why Russia enters the war; mistakes in making important political and strategic decisions; nationalism; anti-Semitism; the incapability of the army in all respects; and the economic backwardness of the country.

Chapter Two: *The Russian Radical Opposition - Between Support for the Fatherland and Internationalism*. If chapter one gives us a more general picture of the state of the Russian Empire in the eve of the war and presents some of the reasons for the empire's collapse, which lay mainly in the personality of Nicholas II and in the very way the Russian state mentality functions, chapter two examines the attitude of the radical opposition to the war. Its vacillation and division into 'defenders' and internationalists is well-captured. A valuable comparison is made between the parties in the empire on the one hand, and the reaction of the left parties in Europe, on the other hand. The author introduces us to the decision of most such parties giving war credits to their governments; it would be interesting to have an answer why they do so (from his point of view, of course). The answer would help us explain why a party like the Bolsheviks would not be able to take power in any of these countries and why the Russian upheavals of 1917 were avoided there.

The doctoral student states on p. 165/166, "It would hardly be an exaggeration to assert that by March 1917.... The Socialist-Revolutionary Party no longer existed as a political entity... practically disappeared...". I think it is an exaggeration. The SR was one of the parties in the Provisional Government (regardless of their role in it). They had most of the votes in the Constituent Assembly elections, and they were the last *partners* of the Bolsheviks before their final abolition. That is, they did not "disappear", they were killed, banned.

Chapter Three: *The Spontaneous Resistance to War* examines the rising tide of anti-war manifestations of the people and the army; culmination of all these events is the February Revolution of 1917. The autocracy fails to cope with the crisis and falls. If in 1905 the army was alongside the king, now it confronted him, which put an end to the monarchy. One of the characteristic features of Russian autocracy is captured and revealed - problems are seen but not solved.

The author's resume accurately reflects the content of the thesis. The articles published follow the topic of the dissertation.

Scientific contributions

- The topic chosen raises many issues for discussion, some of which are discussed at length, others are merely highlighted. One of the most interesting is the war/revolution relationship. The ever catching-up policy of the Russian Empire towards Europe, especially in the economy. The huge gap between the ruling elite and the people, the hatred between different classes and nations within the empire, the war never succeeded in bringing everyone together. During World War I, Russia was one of the countries with

the most strike movements. The revolutionary sentiment grew at the same rate as the patriotic feeling fell. The Bolsheviks took advantage of the radicalization. The western countries succeeded in achieving national unity to a much greater extent in which the proletariat was involved;

- The introduction into the scientific circulation of the archives follow the topic of the dissertation;
- The topic is precisely formulated, as well as the individual chapters and paragraphs are. This ensures the good structure of the work (both chronologically and in terms of meaning); there is a clearly established cause-and-effect relationship between the individual chapters;
- Many diaries and memoirs are used, giving us a different and quite interesting view of the events under consideration. The insight into the personal qualities of the emperor and his wife, their infatuation with mysticism, reminds us that history is indirectly dependent on factors other than diplomacy, treaties, and politics;
- A classification is made of all anti-war movements in Russia - organized, ideologically based, spontaneous; what they were caused by and what they led to;
- An undoubtable advantage of the work is the comparative analysis used in examining the radical parties and their position on the war, as well as its comparison with the position of the European left parties.

Recommendations

- The work has few technical inaccuracies that can be easily corrected, such as: on page 22 it is written that the Decembrist uprising was in 1925; the same quotation is used on page 24, then on page 26, etc.;
- After almost every paragraph and chapter, conclusions, inferences, and summaries are made, often repeating those already made in the text. Such an approach of writing is more appropriate for textbooks, manuals, etc. This unnecessarily makes the text larger and, I am sure unconsciously, imposes opinion. A good option is to replace them with analyses;
- It is well-justified why the end period of the thesis is the February Revolution, but it would be good, and quite logical, to give some space to Russia's exit from the war. This would give the dissertation a more complete look, as well as further development of the paragraph on the revolution itself;
- It would also be a plus for the thesis to draw some light on how Eastern Orthodoxy influenced the government and the development of the country, how attitudes towards religion changed after the advent of Marxism, and why it was so easily replaced by mystical teachings.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I confirm that the legal compliance of the procedure for the defence of the dissertation has been observed, the scientific work itself meets the standards for the acquisition of the scientific degrees regulated in the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and I have no doubts regarding its originality. The dissertation work of **Stefan Petrov Petrov** is a contributory study, written

professionally and precisely. It is a research that includes new sources in the scientific circulation.

All the above-mentioned give me the reason to vote positively for awarding the educational and scientific degree **Doctor** to **Stefan Petrov Petrov** in the field of higher education 2. Humanities, professional line 2.2. History and Archaeology (New and Contemporary General History - History of Russia).

Shumen,
February 2023

MEMBER OF THE SCIENTIFIC JURY:
(Ass. Prof. PhD Asya Atanasova)