

REPORT

On the thesis of Stefan Petrov Petrov
„The Russian Empire and the anti-war movements during World War I“,
submitted for the defense of the academic degree PhD
by professional field 2.2. History and archeology,
scientific specialty: Modern and Contemporary History - History of Russia

by Associate Professor PhD Petya Borisova Dimitrova,
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The thesis of Stefan Petrov Petrov, full-time PhD student at the HF of “Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski”, is a serious attempt at a comprehensive analysis of the anti-war movements in the Russian Empire during World War I.

The thesis, 348 pages long, consists of an introduction, three chapters and a conclusion, followed by a bibliography, which includes a list of all the used unpublished and published documents, other reference sources – diaries, recollections and memoirs, newspapers and periodicals, as well as the historical research used in the process of writing the thesis.

Here, above all, I would like to mention the fact that besides the normal difficulties that every PhD student faces, St. Petrov was forced to overcome additional difficulties as well. For example, the pandemic that broke out at the beginning of his second year as a PhD student, which not only made it difficult to access archives and libraries, but also made impossible the planned specialization in Russia. Another example are the hostilities between Russia and Ukraine that began in February 2022, which ended any hopes of accessing archival materials locally. In this regard, I would like to point out that the author has quite successfully managed to weave documents from the Bulgarian archives into the narrative of the events of the Russian Empire’s history, which, together with the use of archival materials available on the Internet or published in various compilations, manages to largely compensate for the lack of authentic Russian documents.

The introduction contains all the elements required for such a thesis - rationalization of the chronological scope of the thesis, definition of the object and subject of the study, its aims and objectives, the methods of research, a review of the historiography, as well as a brief presentation of the thesis’ contributions.

The main exposition, which follows the thematic principle of structuring the thesis, is developed in three chapters, each of which is divided into relevant subchapters. The structure of the exposition is built in such a way that each of the chapters ends with a conclusion, summarizing the main conclusions of the analysis.

The conclusion of the thesis summarizes the conclusions drawn in the main exposition part.

The thesis analyses all known anti-war movements in the Russian Empire during World War I - both those that were organized and ideologically based, as well as those that arose spontaneously. Such a study is innovative for the Bulgarian historiography, which in itself is a sufficient reason to recognize this thesis as a contribution.

The submitted Author summary with the volume of 24 pages meets all the requirements for a thesis' author summary for awarding the educational and academic degree PhD.

Regarding any critical remarks and recommendations, I would first like to draw attention to some not so convincing points in the main exposition. Such as, for example, the description of the concepts of nation (p. 20), in which the 'civic' nation is said to have 'compact and clearly marked territories', while in the case of the 'ethnic' nation the emphasis is 'on community by birth and on innate culture'. This vague reference to Anthony Smith in fact deprives the construct of 'civic nation' of its essential characteristic as a synthesis of different ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural communities inhabiting these 'compact' territories.

I would also recommend the author to refine his translations from Russian in order to avoid both russisms as well as some inaccuracies (refer for example to pp. 31, 43, 159, 276, 293, etc.).

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that the thesis under review meets the requirements and criteria of the Act on Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and Rules on the Conditions and Procedure for Acquiring Science Degrees and Holding Academic Positions Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". In my opinion, an innovative work with clearly formulated author's theses, which fulfils the set goals and objectives and contains a number of contributory moments, is presented in front of the Scientific Jury. I will therefore vote in favor of awarding the educational and academic degree PhD to Stefan Petrov Petrov.

February 12, 2023

Associate Professor PhD Petya Dimitrova