

REVIEW

by Prof. Romyana Marinova-Christidi,

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on the dissertation of PETYA DIMITROVA PAVLOVA,

full-time doctoral student at the Department of Bulgarian History,

Faculty of History, Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski

on the topic: "TURKEY IN BULGARIAN POLITICS 1989–2004"

for the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor"

in the field of higher education 2. Humanities,

professional direction 2.2. History and Archaeology,

scientific specialty "History of Bulgaria"

Petya Pavlova is a graduate of the “Konstantin Kiril Filosof“ National High School and the Faculty of History at Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in history of the Balkan peoples with excellent academic performance (6.00) and a thesis entitled "Kosovo during the First World War," which received an excellent grade. Again with a perfect grade point average (6.00), she obtained a master's degree in modern and contemporary Bulgarian history with a thesis entitled "Bulgarian-Yugoslav Relations 1969-1975." She has also received two awards related to her historical studies: a certificate from the Bulgarian Diplomatic Society for excellent performance at a national conference on the Balkans and an award from the Regional History Museum in Pernik. This presentation of the doctoral student is necessary not only in view of the formal requirements for reviewing a dissertation.

This presentation of the doctoral student is necessary not only in view of the formal requirements for reviewing a dissertation. It allows us to trace the interests of our young colleague and their evolution towards topics related to Balkan and Bulgarian history in the most recent period.

Therefore, the choice of the dissertation topic – "Turkey in Bulgarian Politics 1989-2004" – seems quite logical. She is working on it as a regular doctoral student in the Department of Bulgarian History at the Faculty of History of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" from February 2020 to June 2025 under the scientific guidance of the leading specialist in this field – Prof. Dr. Evgenia Kalinova. The doctoral student has also presented 23 publications on Balkan topics, 8 of which are on the topic of her dissertation.

The topic of the dissertation, as formulated, requires knowledge of both the political development of Bulgaria and Turkey and the state of international relations after the collapse of the bipolar world and, against this backdrop, an examination of bilateral relations. During the period in question, these relations have not been the subject of comprehensive independent research, and in this sense, the dissertation contributes to filling a gap in Bulgarian

historiography. In highlighting the significance of the topic, Petya Pavlova emphasizes the complex legacy of relations between the two countries in historical terms and the search for the "right tone" in communication after 1989. The doctoral student's goal is to build on what has already been achieved by historiography, both chronologically and thematically. She has done an excellent job with this task, and the conclusions of the dissertation contribute to a better orientation, including historical, in formulating the guidelines of today's Bulgarian foreign policy. The chronological boundaries are well defined and justified – from the change in Bulgaria in 1989, when relations with Turkey were at their lowest point, to 2004, when the two countries became allies in NATO.

The dissertation consists of an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, and a bibliography, with an impressive total of 502 pages. The introduction covers the mandatory topics for this part of the dissertation: structure, chronological boundaries, source base, and the state of historiography. The objectives of the dissertation are stated as the formation of Bulgaria's attitude towards Turkey and the political line during this period, including the military, economic, and cultural ties between the two countries. In the introduction, Petya Pavlova demonstrates a good understanding of the state of research on Bulgaria's relations with Turkey, which is a prerequisite for the successful development of the dissertation. The well-structured bibliography at the end of the dissertation lists over 100 scientific publications in Cyrillic, English, and Turkish. They are correctly and conscientiously cited in the text.

The analyses and conclusions in Petya Pavlova's research are based on a solid source base, and in this respect, the doctoral student has done an excellent job. She has searched for documents from 10 fonds of the Central State Archives of the Republic of Bulgaria, 34 from the Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and 4 from the Archives of the Presidential Administration. In addition to the archival sources, Petya Pavlova has made efforts to search for numerous published documents, collections, memoirs, journalism, reference books, periodicals, and Internet sources providing diverse information on various aspects of bilateral relations. The inclusion of such abundant archival and other sources in the study undoubtedly enhances its quality and is one of the contributions of the dissertation. The search for and introduction into scientific circulation of such a volume of sources is an excellent testament to Petya Pavlova's serious approach to research work.

The first chapter is entitled "Political Relations between Bulgaria and Turkey 1989-2004" and is divided into four paragraphs. The first section examines Bulgarian Turks as a key factor in relations between the two countries, with a very successful separate examination of Turks within Bulgaria and Bulgarian Turks who have emigrated to Turkish territory. It is to the author's credit that she has not shied away from the sensitive topic of the controversial role of the Movement for Rights and Freedoms and its leader Ahmed Dogan in the early years after the change of the system, as well as the relations of this political factor with the Republic of Turkey and, in particular, with Turkish diplomatic representatives in Bulgaria. The second paragraph examines the main points in the political relations between the two countries, the normalisation of contacts at state and local government level, the conclusion of the 1992 Treaty of Friendship, Good Neighbourliness, Cooperation and Security, and the positions on important international issues. The process of drafting the agreement, the differences between the Bulgarian and Turkish versions, the negotiations, the signing, the clauses, and their significance are carefully traced. The third paragraph is devoted to consular relations. Here, the doctoral student has used a large amount of information, which she has patiently and conscientiously

processed, analyzed, and presented to the reader as valuable information about this often underestimated but actually very important part of diplomatic work. The information she provides on the professional profile of Turkish ambassadors in Bulgaria is very valuable, as it is indicative of the importance that the country has for Turkey. The fourth paragraph is devoted to mutual disputes over property, social, and humanitarian issues, such as claims against Turkey for property belonging to Bulgarians expelled from its territory after the Balkan and First World Wars; the payment of pensions to Bulgarians who emigrated to Turkey; the issue of reuniting families separated as a result of migration processes between the two countries. Based on what has already been achieved in Bulgarian historiography, but supplemented with archival documents and the necessary footnotes, the discussions on these issues are traced.

The second chapter examines the relations between Bulgaria and Turkey in the field of defense and security in the period 1989-2004, and cooperation in this area, which is of paramount importance for Bulgaria in the years when the country is striving for successful Euro-Atlantic integration. Based on rich documentary and source material, the doctoral student reveals in detail the difficult path of change in the countries' relations with each other - from the image inherited from the past of an enemy state and a threat to national security to an important strategic partner with whom mutual trust must be built. This informative chapter also traces the resolution of the long-standing dispute over the determination of the border line along the Rezovska River, cooperation in the fight against illegal trafficking, smuggling, and terrorism, and cooperation between the legal authorities of the two countries. It also touches on the important issue for Turkey of the Kurds and the violence used by both sides in the conflict. In this chapter, the doctoral student has demonstrated her ability to work with a huge amount of information, to process, analyze, and systematize it, without losing the chronological and logical thread of the text.

The third chapter is devoted to Bulgarian-Turkish relations in the field of economics. It is divided into eight paragraphs, which examine individual sectors such as trade and investment partnership, agriculture and livestock farming, energy, transport, infrastructure projects, telecommunications, tourism, and cooperation within the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation. The doctoral student demonstrates an understanding of the main processes in the economic development and foreign trade orientation of the two countries, which stimulate the search for contacts between them in this area. These contacts are presented in detail and reveal their contractual basis and the results for both countries, which is definitely a contribution and deserves high praise. Based on abundant archival material, it is shown how the mutual interest of the two countries and the improved "climate" between them become the basis for upward economic cooperation and significant partnership. These processes are skillfully traced in the context of Bulgaria's increasingly successful progress towards EU membership and the less favorable prospects for Turkey's membership. A significant contribution of this chapter are the tables in which the doctoral student has systematized a large amount of quantitative and statistical information, presenting in a clear and easily understandable way various aspects of the dynamics of economic relations between the two countries.

The fourth chapter is structured in three paragraphs and examines the contacts between Bulgaria and Turkey in the fields of culture, education, and science. The doctoral student convincingly shows how these contacts are directly dependent on political relations and public sentiment. Among the main reasons for their delayed development during this period, she highlights the

lack of trust on the part of Bulgaria towards Turkish geopolitical interests, the strong polarization in Bulgarian society regarding state policy towards Bulgarian Turks, and the lack of financial resources for bilateral cultural events. The contradictory issues of teaching Turkish as a mother tongue in Bulgarian schools and the subject of "Religion," which are examined in detail by the doctoral student, also deserve high praise. The detailed text on cooperation in the field of higher education and between the universities of the two countries also deserves attention. The paragraph on cooperation in the field of archival science and the exchange of archival documents is also a valuable contribution. The information on cultural exchange is also very detailed, with the doctoral student summarising that the cultural agreement concluded between the two countries in 1997 gave impetus to the institutional development of relations, but nevertheless, the Bulgarian state does not recognize the expansion of contacts with Turkey as a priority task.

The conclusion presents the main points of the dissertation and demonstrates the doctoral student's ability to formulate clear conclusions based on the detailed analyses performed.

Some recommendations could be made regarding the text of the dissertation. First, the excessive length (actually much more than the stated 502 pages, as the spacing is not standard) makes the dissertation difficult to read. The overly detailed description of places, the accumulation and listing of too many facts and details sometimes distract the reader from the big picture and the analysis. This is not a problem on the part of the doctoral student, but part of the larger question of whether we require a doctoral student to exhaust the topic down to every factual detail or to approach it more conceptually. In any case, the text would only benefit from being "lightened" in terms of unnecessary details and detailed descriptions, making it more accessible and useful to readers. This is a recommendation for the possible future publication of the dissertation, not for the work presented for defense.

I think it would be useful in the future to examine the role of Islam among Bulgarian Turks – whether it has grown stronger since 1989 among Turks in Bulgaria and, on the other hand, whether the high degree of secularism among Bulgarian emigrants in Turkey has an impact on the attitude towards them there. More attention should be paid (it is only mentioned in the text) to the role of the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) as a conduit for Turkish influence in the fields of education, science, and culture, Turkey's efforts to open an office of the organization in Bulgaria, and Bulgaria's resistance to these efforts.

The text is notable for its lack of Turkish archival sources and, accordingly, the Turkish perspective on events and relations, but this is not an omission on the part of the doctoral student, because in the formulation of the topic she makes the reservation that she is considering Turkey in Bulgarian politics, not Bulgarian-Turkish relations. In this sense, this also remains a recommendation for future additions to the study.

The recommendations made in no way detract from the overall excellent impression of Petya Pavlova's dissertation, which represents an independent and in-depth study based on serious documentary evidence. With it, the doctoral student demonstrates the skills of a professional historian. An additional but important plus is the excellent style of presentation.

The abstract corresponds to the content of the dissertation, and the scientific contributions, although formulated rather concisely, give an idea of the scientific significance of the dissertation. Petya Pavlova's publication activity deserves an excellent rating. She has a total of

twenty-three publications (two of them in English, one of them abroad), eight of which are on the topic of the dissertation in scientific collections and journals. Thus, the doctoral student even exceeds the requirements for publication activity during her doctoral studies and the necessary credits. Her participation in 18 scientific conferences is also impressive, which has definitely contributed to the scientific growth of our young colleague.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that Petya Pavlova's dissertation fully meets the criteria for serious and professional scientific research. My assessment of it is positive, and I will therefore vote for the doctoral student to be awarded the educational and scientific degree of "doctor."

Prof. Dr. Romyana Marinova-Hristidi