

## REPORT

by Assoc. Prof. Naoum Iliev Kaytchev

(Faculty of History, Sofia University 'St. Kliment Ohridski')

on the dissertation thesis of Dimitar Georgiev Dobrev on the topic

*NATO AND GREEK-YUGOSLAV RELATIONS (1952-1967)*

Institute of Balkan Studies and Center of Thracology

Scientific area: 2 Humanities

Professional field: 2.2. History and Archeology

The topic of the dissertation thesis *NATO and Greek-Yugoslav relations (1952-1967)* with academic supervisor Corresponding Member Prof. Alexandre Kostov has been chosen very appropriately because such monographic research has not been accomplished not only in Bulgaria; therefore there are many aspects of the topic that had not been treated by the world historiography; on the other hand it undoubtedly has contemporary importance for our knowledge on the present-day Balkans and their place in the Euro Atlantic security system.

The dissertation has 278 pages and is structured in introduction, three chapters, conclusion and list of sources and bibliography. The thesis is based on the impressively voluminous Bulgarian, Serbian and especially English language (including by Greek authors) historiography on the researched problem, also on published, including on internet, documents, as well as on additional unpublished sources – diplomatic correspondence, found in the Bulgarian Central Archive and in the Archive of Yugoslavia in Belgrade. The rich specter of sources is the basis on which the candidate has made a full-fledged research that successfully explores and analyses the key aspects of the studied topic.

In accordance with his views on the time dynamic of the period Mr. Dobrev has divided his thesis on three different chapters, reflecting the key features of the respective sub-periods: the intensive search for security by Belgrade, Athens and the Alliance in 1952-1954; the emergence of serious problems but with preservation of the sustainability of the explored triangle in 1955-1959; the tendencies for disintegration of that triangle that took pace in 1960-1967, caused globally by the diminishment of the threat of Soviet bloc aggression, also by the rise on the Non-Aligned Movement, that provided Yugoslavia with nearly global role, that led it to the her distancing from US and NATO, and regionally the NATO's disappointments in Cyprus were combined with the complications over the Yugoslav-Greek contradictions on the Macedonian issue.

Mr. Dobrev is a graduate of MA programme in diplomacy and international relations which has affected his approach to the thesis – by using maximum number of published research and primary sources he strives to create broad and large-scale picture of NATO's relationship not only with Yugoslavia and Greece, but with nearly the whole Eastern Mediterranean, and that in the global context of the confrontation with the Eastern bloc led by the Soviet Union. The correct earnest comparative-analytic use of the sources permitted him to explore and write a very convincing and large-scale account on the interrelationship between NATO and the two Balkan countries.

The specific scholar contributions of the thesis are different, but I would like to point out the analytic outline of the continuing geopolitical importance of the Vardar valley – in the first half of 1950s it is one of the main focuses of NATO's defense planning on its Southern flank (p. 29-38). The clarification of the Balkan Pact's place in the system of collective defense dominated by the North Atlantic Alliance has also some contributive elements (p. 66-93). The Bulgarian historiography has not dealt extensively on the Macedonian issue in the Yugoslav-Greek relations in 1950s and 1960s and this dissertation is a positive step in this direction.

One could address some critical remarks on the suggested thesis – striving to recreate a large-scale picture and to reveal all big geopolitical factors that influenced Yugoslavia, Greece and their interrelationship with NATO, the Greek-Yugoslav relations themselves do not receive adequate attention – instead of being one of the major pillars of the account, in parts of the dissertation they are treated as one of the many elements of the composition. The thesis has not revealed whether USA and NATO had some attitude to the frictions between Belgrade and Athens over the Macedonian issue, and the very place of Macedonia in Greek-Yugoslav relations in 1963–1967 is conveyed very laconically in the last paragraph of the dissertation (p.244-245).

The dissertation thesis is positively marked by correct use of the terminology. Among the very few exceptions is the term ‘Greek Civil War’ (p. 4, 15, 191 and others) that has been used by the author under the influence of English language books. It is not by case that Bulgarian historiography has adopted the designation ‘Civil War in Greece’ – for in the ideological armed conflict in Greece along with ethnic Greeks participated also Bulgarian Macedonian and other populations. However, this example is almost the single exception – the candidate has a precise control over the complex political-historical and geographic terminology, which is one of the markers of his maturing as scholar of the history of the Cold War in the Balkans.

In conclusion, taking into account the above mentioned undoubted merits of the dissertation thesis, I support the respected academic jury to reward the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” to Mr. Dimitar Georgiev Dobrev.

**Member of the academic jury:**

(Accos. Prof. Dr. N. Kaytchev)

Sofia, 14 May 2021