

Statement

By Assoc. Prof. Dr. Kristina Popova

for Petya Valkova Angelova's dissertation

on the topic "Youth political resistance 1944-1949"

To obtain the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in professional field 3.1. Sociology, anthropology and cultural sciences, doctoral program "Cultural Studies" - Youth in Bulgaria. Public debates, social actions, movements, ideologies, political regimes and institutional structures in the late 19th and 20th centuries

Petya Angelova's dissertation work on the topic "Youth political resistance 1944-1949" is 250 pages long and consists of an introduction, 8 chapters and a conclusion, a list of used sources and a bibliography. The topic of the dissertation is successfully chosen and appropriately formulated, placing in the center of the research attention a new aspect of the scientific examination of the resistance against the Patriotic Front's power: the youth resistance. The legal opposition activity in the period 1944-1947, the press, as well as the illegal movement of 'Goryani' mountain groups has been the subject of a lot of studies and archive document collections, but the significance of the generational aspect of this resistance has not been placed in the center of research attention so far, and in this sense the dissertation work reveals its innovative potential. The end of the historical period that Petya Angelova research 1944 - 1949 is marked by important events such as the death of Georgi Dimitrov in July of the same year, the trial against Traycho Kostov and the elections for the National Assembly..

The structure of Petya Angelova's work offers a good balance between theory and historical narrative. The content is divided into eight relatively small chapters, some of which are only a few pages long. It was possible to connect these parts into larger chapters that would cover the

issues more comprehensively and highlight more clearly and more convincingly the conclusions on the main issues, as well as the main contributions of the author.

In the introduction of the dissertation, the main goals and tasks of the research are formulated, the sources and the historiography are indicated. For the writing of the dissertation, sources corresponding to these goals and tasks were used: documents of the Central State Archive, the Archive of the Commission for Disclosure of State Security Files (AKRDOPBGDSRSBNA), published memories of youth activists, periodicals of youth organizations and opposition parties. The theoretical part of the dissertation creates a suitable basis for the author's further research. Here she demonstrates her competence in research and knowledge of the historical literature and a good elucidation of the concept of political resistance, referring above all to Hannah Arendt. Also useful would be Hannah Arendt's view of the different role of youth in totalitarian societies, where the power, exploiting the generational conflict, aims to indoctrinate and use it as its ally, while in democratic societies the youth are usually among the opposition forces. The author's conclusions that the youth policy of the government aims to remove political pluralism are well founded. In this theoretical part, it would be good to present the generational problem in modern societies and generational theories, especially those about post-war youth, as in Helmut Schellsky's classic work 'The Skeptical Generation' (1957) and other historical-sociological studies of youth (Petar-Emil Mitev and others). In order to present the attitudes and contradictory processes among the post-war young generation, many memoirs can be used, such as the memories of Vera Mutafchieva, Lada Brashovanova and other authors. Thus, the government's policies to control the free time of young people and their attempts to maintain a perimeter for their private lives and free expressions would stand out.

The fourth chapter of the dissertation presents the main youth organizations in this period and the main trends of their development: RMS (Communist Youth), ZMS (Agrarians), SSM (Socialist Youth), the youth union "Zveno", the youth organizations of the Democratic and Radical parties, the youth anarchists and the banned youth organizations. To them could be added the young people of the Macedonian Movement (Mikhailovists), especially from the Pirin region, subjected to political persecution. Correctly, the activities of the anarchist Tsvetana Germanova were thoroughly revealed in the dissertation, but other leaders of political youth organizations, such as the socialist Lyudmila Slavova, secretary of the SSM, arrested and killed by State Security, remained out of the author's view.

The fifth chapter of the dissertation is devoted to the ideological concepts of youth and the new youth in the second half of the 1940s. The author rightly turns to an analysis of the development

of Soviet concepts, insofar as they are not only followed, but often copied in the Bulgarian case. It seems to me that Evgeniy Dobrenko's book on late Stalinism would help here, because this is precisely the time when the Soviet model was imposed in Bulgaria. Some imprecise designations and generalizations should also be avoided. Placing 'Brannik' and legionnaires on the same plane is a propaganda move of the then government, but there are big differences between them, along with some common features.

Chapters six, seven and eight form the heart of the dissertation and here its main contributions are concentrated. In the sixth chapter, "The Periodical Press and Youth", the main place is given to the ZMS (Agrarians). The author successfully compares the two newspapers - the opposition one and the PF one - and traces the main views as well as the contradictions in the political behavior of the youth leaders. She reaches the important conclusion that in the "National Agricultural Flag" newspaper, the youth theme is many times more prevalent than in the other one. In Chapter Seven, Petya Angelova traces the youth resistance against the creation of a united organization - the most important manifestation of youth resistance. The approaches to the unified youth organizations EMO, EMOS and the eventual creation of SNM (Union of the People's Youth) are presented, as well as the resistance of young Agrarians, socialists and democrats against these attempts. Particularly valuable are the author's observations on academic resistance, about which too little is known. Still, more names could be cited here, such as e.g. the democrat Svetozar Raev, a member of the Democratic Academic Club, who was sent to Belene and Kutsiyan.

The eighth chapter of the dissertation reveals the participation of young people in illegal forms of resistance: armed resistance and 'resistance through the word'. The author cites numerous examples of such participation and makes some generalizations about the significant youth participation in the Goryani movement. Briefly, this part mentions the young people of the Macedonian movement, but more space could be devoted to them, as they were in contact with other opposition figures, using the memories of Borislav Ivanov, Slavcho Jolev (in the State Archive, unpublished), Pando Mladenov and others, especially since they are also participants in the mountain groups. The author rightly points out the youth participation in illegal formations and especially in mountain groups, their main goals and especially their importance for young people in organizing escapes abroad. I would also recommend using the memories of people connected to Gerasim Todorov's group, collected by Lalka Bengyuzova, published a few years ago. Political resistance through speech was also an important aspect of youth resistance in those years. The example of Anna Vasileva, the author of slogans against the

government, as well as other girls who participated in opposition events, is noteworthy. It would be good if Krastyo Hadjiivanov, a mountaineer and poet, author of numerous poems, in which he glorifies freedom and criticizes the USSR, joins this 'resistance through the word'.

In the conclusion, Petya Angelova summarizes the place of youth political resistance in the overall picture of the opposition activity in Bulgaria in the studied period. Here she also draws some important conclusions about the success of this resistance.

In addition to the recommendations made in the course of the presentation, I also have some more general notes on the work that could be taken into account in the eventual preparation of the dissertation for publication. A significant omission in it is the absence of the policy towards Muslim youth, and especially the absence of their participation in the mountain groups along the border with Greece, for which, in addition to archival data, Sergey Vuchkov's publications can be used. It would be good to include the activities of Christian youth (Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant) among the forms of passive resistance, especially since they are subjected to persecution, ridicule and many other restrictions. It is also necessary to clarify the use of concepts such as "Komsomol", 'comorganization', etc. One could also think about comparative aspects with other countries of the Soviet bloc - such as neighboring Romania, where there are some similar processes of political development, which would enrich the work.

In conclusion, I would express my opinion that Petya Angelova's work " Youth Political Resistance 1944-1949" is written in a good academic style. Regardless of the comments and recommendations made, I believe that Petya Angelova's dissertation is a contribution to the research of the resistance against the regime after 1944 , has the qualities of a serious scientific study and meets the requirements for the educational and scientific degree "doctor". Based on all of the above, I confidently express my **positive opinion** by voting for doctoral student Petya Valkova Angelova to be awarded the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in a scientific specialty in professional area 3.1. Sociology, anthropology and cultural sciences.

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