

## Officers and Cadets from the Third Bulgarian Kingdom – Followers of European Maritime Attainments

The book „Bulgarian Naval Officers Training Abroad (1882-1944)”<sup>1</sup> is a monograph work accomplished by Asen Kozhuharov. The author is a lecturer of long standing in Nikola Vaptsarov Naval Academy in Varna. He adroitly amalgamates the teaching at the University with continuous purposive research work. Undoubtedly, the monograph is a manifestation of the profound knowledge of naval history problems, and in particular, of characteristics of military educational systems of leading European countries in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Reading the book provokes interest in several aspects.

On the one hand, the maritime educational system at the dawn of the Third Bulgarian Kingdom is relatively well revealed in the second half of the twentieth century. However, the pro-

cessing of historical data in colligated comprehensive research poses a challenge. Besides, obscured details are presented which expand and supplement gaps of preceding authors. The focus of the study is placed precisely on this sensitive area, which has remained virtually unexplored thoroughly until now. Analysis and evaluation of the causes, that led to the political decision to send „Bulgarian officers and cadets abroad“ and their contribution to laying the foundations of Bulgarian maritime educational system, are carried out.<sup>2</sup> Historical events, object of the monograph, are linked and refracted through the prism of an officer who is dedicated to the military educational system. It provides distinctive depth and specific horizon of the research work. Furthermore, trends are revealed, systematized and assembled in processes, responding to the slightest influence of every relevant piece of information.

On the other hand, the time framework of this scientific research covers a peculiar historical period, saturated

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<sup>1</sup> Кожухаров, Асен. *Обучението на българските морски офицери зад граница (1882–1944)*. Варна, Тера Балканика, 2015, 258 с. (Kozhuhkarov, Asen. *Bulgarian Naval Officers Training Abroad (1882–1944)*. Varna: Terra Balcanica Publishing House, 2015).

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<sup>2</sup> Op. cit., 6–9.

with crucial geopolitical events that inevitably produced effects on the concept of the Bulgarian educational system. The Great Powers at the end of the nineteenth century also left a trail of visible effects on the process of developing adequate maritime education.<sup>3</sup> It is shown that the necessity of the existence of an alternative to changing in qualitative aspect of the newly built educational system is realized and grown to maturity. The course of sending cadets and officers outside of the country adopted and pursued by the government is a reason to a certain extent for the officer's community to be described as „conglomerate of alumni of various naval educational systems”<sup>4</sup>. European maritime attainments and traditions were transferred to Bulgaria and used for the revival of the Navy after their return.

The book consists of two coherent chapters. Components are differentiated in natural manner and are reflection of two major sources of influence that formed the peculiarities of the Bulgarian maritime educational system – the Russian empire and leading naval countries of Western Europe. Historical facts are systematized according to the location of educational institution, besides, shown in chronological order. Archival materials are analyzed, revealing a magnitude of processes of education and training abroad both in the Russian Empire and in Western European coun-

tries in the period from 1882 to 1944. The monograph places gathered historical information impersonally in the detailed time framework, irrespectively of obstacles posed by dynamic and often contradictory processes and phenomena related to the process of studying abroad.

Actually, the book is current with most recent researches. Correspondingly, contemporary investigation is carried out by John W. Sacca. It examines the training of Chinese officers sent to the United States in the early twentieth century<sup>5</sup>. The applied methodology gives an advantageous expedient for getting to knowledge of education and training a century ago. It is utilized by Kozhuharov for establishing criteria for assessing the importance of education abroad during forming of conditions for development of maritime education. Sacca's tools are upgraded and adapted so that to be applicable for assessment of Bulgarian naval officers and cadets education overseas.

Furthermore, the author follows previous achievements of Bulgarian experts on the second half of the twentieth century. It is disclosed that preceding publications paid particular attention mainly to officers and cadets graduated in the Russian Empire. Surveys of authors, such as Radi Boev, Vladimir I. Pavlov, Ivan Tanchev, Ru-

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<sup>3</sup> Op. cit., 127-128.

<sup>4</sup> Op. cit., p. 6.

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<sup>5</sup> Sacca, J.W. (2006). *Like Strangers in a Foreign Land: Chinese Officers Prepared at American Military Colleges, 1904-1937*. *Journal of Military History*, 70(3), 703–742.

men Rumelin, are milestones in the study of professional training abroad during the days of the Third Bulgarian Kingdom. They deal not only with persons with specific importance in maritime history and activities related to the Navy, but also they mention a wide spectrum of activities undertaken by alumni. Kozhuharov acknowledges the existence of this professional and social phenomenon.<sup>6</sup> He also specifies that there are significant discrepancies in the latter mentioned publications and incorrect data, and thus there are a lot of samples of deviation from the impartial assessment.<sup>7</sup> Hence, the monograph can claim to contribute to the development of naval history. It gives some specific outlines of the modern Bulgarian historical criticism.

It is also necessary to be appreciated that virtually all feasible sources in the Republic of Bulgaria, storing related documents to maritime educational system are explored throughout the research. For instance in the monograph are cited documents that have been researched in available funds of the Central governmental archive in Sofia, the Governmental Military History Archive situated in Veliko arnovo the Governmental Archive in Ruse, the History Museum in Batak, the Govern-

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<sup>6</sup> Kozhuharov A. (2012). *Career Study of Bulgarian Cadets Trained in Trieste "Accademia Di Commercio E Di Nautica" (1892 – 1942)*. Bulgarian Historical Review, (3–4), 193–209.

<sup>7</sup> Kozhuharov A. (2012). *Op. cit.*, 193–194.

mental Archive located in Varna, the Naval Museum in Varna and Bulgarian Historical Archive in the “St. St. Cyril and Methodius” National Library.<sup>8</sup>

Obviously, researching only the available funds in Bulgarian does not solve the problem entirely. The author exceeds the limits and makes a “step ahead” in the study of the problem by examining historical sources outside Bulgaria. He explores to some extent the Russian Governmental Archive of the Navy (Rossijskij Gosudarstvenyj Arhiv Voenno Morskogo Flota) – St. Petersburg (RGA – VMF)<sup>9</sup>. Relevant documents concerning Naval Academies in St. Petersburg and Kronstadt within the boundaries of the Russian Empire associated with education of Bulgarians are utilized, thus obtaining a favourable outcome.

The study is expanded by means of exploring the “footprints” left after training of Bulgarian marine officers in Livorno, Trieste, Brest and Flensburg. As a result, basic trends and regularities are highlighted and some effects are projected on the forming of the Bulgarian maritime education system. Historical events are restored. Along with it, analysis and evaluation of building a new foundations of “Navy and maritime industry” are carried out. Using this approach, the

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<sup>8</sup> Asen Kozhuharov was executive director of national project RD 11-6700/131/10.03.11 „Personal documents issued by Bulgarian Maritime Educational System”, realized in 2011.

<sup>9</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 193.

primary objective is achieved and the tasks are resolved.<sup>10</sup>

A favourable environment for the development of the research process is created by means of the chosen methodology. General scientific research methods and specific methods of historical science are used. It is proved as a powerful means to reach the goal. For example, the historical typology in revealing the specifics of a cultural environment is applied and the complex historical analysis and summary of the studied phenomena are used. Criteria for analysis and evaluation of the studied historical facts are laid on the stable foundation of cleverly selected indicators. An assessment of the information obtained from the studied historical sources is made. After that, synthesis of revealed trends of studied processes and events is performed.

The author makes visible some regularity derived in correlation with the state of relationship between the Principality of Bulgaria and the Russian Empire. Although the level of dependence on the Russian educational system in the aspect of education and training of future officers varies from tolerant partnership through reservedness to severed disavowal, the training in St. Petersburg and Kronshtadt continue during the time, but their quantity is not permanent. The author distinguishes “waves

of trainees”.<sup>11</sup> Usually, the destinies of the young officers graduated abroad are predetermined by the inevitable course of events caused by these heavy waves. Training abroad played a role and formed the orientation and understanding of many Bulgarian naval officers on eve of wars. For example, a synthesized description of the situation of divergence of interest before the start of World War I, in consequence of which the Ministry of War in Sofia “seeks other opportunities beyond the circle of Russian naval schools.”<sup>12</sup> This is a completely natural process of formation of a sovereign national policy and determination of a kind of level of national ambitions, the pursuit of which invariably has a projection in the military education system.

The author reveals shortcomings in the training of marine specialists abroad. They are summarized in two aspects. Firstly, there are “defects” of the system caused by deficiencies in the selection of candidates for training. He quotes some current publications in Russia that discuss weaknesses in training programs and in particular criticize the organization of sea-going practices. However, it should be noted that the Bulgarians are generally satisfied with their training and gladly mention it in the memoirs. Anton Prudkin is pointed as emblematic but contentious example.<sup>13</sup> Obviously,

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<sup>10</sup> Kozhukharov A. (2015). *Bulgarian Naval Officers Training Abroad (1882–1944)*. Varna: Terra Balcanica Publishing house, 246–249.

<sup>11</sup> Kozhukharov A. (2015). *Op. cit.*, 44–45.

<sup>12</sup> Kozhukharov A. (2015). *Op. cit.*, p. 138.

<sup>13</sup> Kozhukharov A. (2015). *Op. cit.*, 113–114.

there are some failures traceable in the process. It is marked that the recruitment of trainees was random and not always satisfactory.<sup>14</sup> Secondly, there were adverse effects of political decisions on the further development of the maritime educational system, important part of which is education abroad. Bulgarian crews were greeted cold in Russia in periods of tension. Nevertheless, the officers who studied in Russia were regularly used for the purposes of diplomacy in “critical situations”.<sup>15</sup> The evolution process of education abroad is intermittent but its character, obviously, depends on diplomacy.

The author sheds light on a relatively poorly studied and controversial period of the Bulgarian naval history, impartially and without ideological bias. He subtly suggests that nowadays these facts, events and maritime officers have a kind of fractal reflection. Education abroad leaves behind an indelible “sign” on the fate and career of Bulgarian officers, whether realized in the Navy, or sailing on board of merchant ships around the world. Geopolitical environment worldwide by the end of the XIX century to the 40s of the XX century challenges the Bulgarian maritime educational system. Interfered by

military-political factors, it affected the development of young Bulgarian Navy and the fate of the officers who gave away their own youth to the sea. They all remain in history as the descendants of European maritime values and achievements.

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<sup>14</sup> Kozhukharov A. (2015). *Op. cit.*, 114–116.

<sup>15</sup> Kozhukharov A. (2015). *Op. cit.*, 118–126.

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