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Reviews and Annotations
Рецензии и анотации

HISTORY OF PRESENT-DAY BULGARIAN MILITARY INTELLIGENCE IN THE STUDY OF DR. YORDAN BAEV (SECOND HALF OF 20TH CENTURY – EARLY 21ST CENTURY)

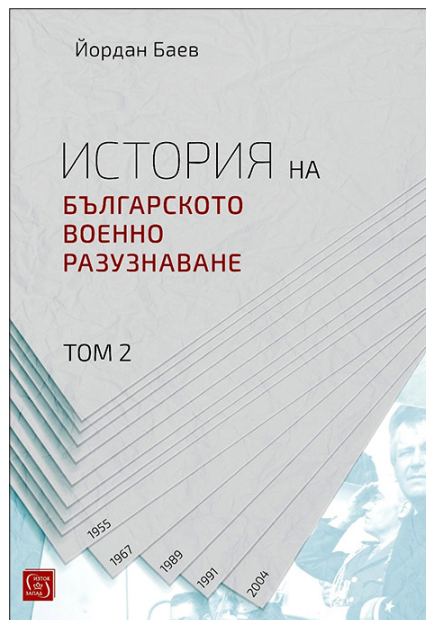
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The work of the Bulgarian military historian – Professor Yordan Baev – covers the period of activity of the military intelligence officers of Bulgaria from the time of its entry into the Warsaw Pact in 1955 up to the recent reforms of this special service of the Bulgarian army adopted in the 21st century. This work is an important step in the study of the history of military intelligence in Bulgaria. Previously unpublished sources have been used in the making of the work.

Earlier in time, a review of the study was published in scientific periodicals, but, this review of the works of historians included 2 volumes (Ulunyan 2020, 311 – 322). However, since the second volume was written by a scientist without a co-author, we deem that the work in question deserves a separate review.

Professor Yordan Baev has hundreds of scientific and popular science works published in different countries. They are dedicated to the problems of military-political history, the history of military intelligence, the history of international peacekeeping operations and other military-political topics. It should be noted that Y. Baev is the author of a number of books on the history of Bulgarian intelligence published in 2021 (Baev 2021a; Baev 2021b). This historian has repeatedly participated in co-authorship with other researchers (Baev 2010;



Stanchev, Nikolov & Baev 2017) in the studying of a number of episodes of the formation and organization of the intelligence services in Bulgaria.

The basis of the study reviewed by Y. Baev includes the documents of the Central State Archives of Bulgaria and the COMDOS archive (the archive of the Commission for the Disclosure of Documents and the declaration of relation of Bulgarian citizens to the State Security and Intelligence Service of the Bulgarian People's Army), as well as the memoirs of military intelligence officers. It should be noted that the work was written by an experienced researcher and is an important milestone in the study of the history of the Bulgarian intelligence services at the present stage. The author, if assessed with account of his other books already published and dedicated to the study of the activities of military intelligence, should be attributed to authoritative experts focusing on the history of modern intelligence operations of the Bulgarian military intelligence in the second half of 20st century – early 21st century.

The book includes four main chapters and informative annexes intended for those interested in the history of the intelligence services of the Bulgarian army. The annexes harmoniously complement the content of the research materials.

The first chapter focuses on the activities of the Bulgarian military intelligence after the country's accession to the Warsaw Pact in 1955. It examines the milestones of cooperation in the intelligence sphere between the Bulgarian officers and the political leadership of the country and the special services of various communist states in Europe and Asia. The author also explained the political context of the crises of the 1950 – 1990s, pointing to the important moments of the activities of the Bulgarian intelligence. An interesting analysis is made of the work of the intelligence service during the Suez and Caribbean crises (Baev 2019, 56).

A reader interested in the history of the activities of the intelligence services in the post-war period would find interesting to understand the technical side of the work of the military intelligence service. For example, a strong impression is made by the radio intelligence capabilities of the Bulgarian army depicted in the study (Baev 2019, 59 – 60).

The second chapter examines the work of military intelligence officers from Sofia after the defeat of the reformist forces of the communist countries of Europe associated with the defeat of the Czechoslovak national liberation movement in 1968. The lower time interval of this part of the work is the collapse of the pro-Soviet regimes in Eastern Europe in 1991. This part of the book shows important issues in the organization of the military intelligence activities of the Bulgarian army, related to the reforms in intelligence and the peculiarities of personnel-related decisions.

From the point of view of study of the intelligence activities of the Balkan intelligence services, the activities of the special services in the 1960s and 1970s are important in the context of the Chinese diplomatic activity in the Balkans,

in particular, the visits of Chinese diplomats to Bucharest, Belgrade and Tirana (Baev 2019, 111).

The analysis of the elements of structural reforms is an important vector for studying the history of intelligence. In this chapter, Y. Baev managed to trace in time the development of certain areas of work of the intelligence organization of the Bulgarian army (Baev 2019, 139 – 144).

In the third part of the book, Yordan Baev describes the very intelligence activities of the military officers from Sofia, their methodology, difficulties and successes. The events are logically tied to the political episodes in the history of the second half of the 20th century. The author shows the reaction of the intelligence service to the important military-political events of the era and the driving forces that helped the Bulgarian military intelligence to implement the tasks set.

The study also shed some light on the improvements in the training of military intelligence personnel in Bulgaria. For example, a methodology for improving the quality of special training for intelligence officers, introduced since 1965 in intelligence centers, is disclosed (Baev 2019, 150 – 151).

In this episode, the question of interaction of the military intelligence services of the Warsaw Pact countries was also highlighted. The author rightly accentuates the poor elaboration of this complex issue in the modern scientific literature (Baev 2019, 211).

The study of issues related to the past of the Warsaw Pact requires the researching of the degree of influence of the Soviet military intelligence service on the activities of the intelligence officers from Sofia. This aspect also did not escape the historian's attention. By using the method of careful study of official documents, the author arrived to the conclusion that the Bulgarian intelligence agents were often self-dependent in their work. Very interesting are The author's opinion on the relationship between the intelligence services of the Warsaw Pact, which were not cloudless on many occasions, are of particular interest (Baev 2019, 278). The author pays considerable attention to the most active line of activity in the period of the 1970 – 1980s – the so-called “Romanian direction” of the work of the Bulgarian intelligence officers (Baev 2019, 180). Of certain interest is also the information about the activities of the military attaches of Bulgaria in the Asian direction, for example, in the DPRK and the military diplomats of communist Korea in Sofia (Baev 2019, 258). The author reasonably proves that until 1990 the main direction in the activities of military intelligence, which was indicated by the General Staff of the Army, was the collection of information in Turkey, in particular, the search for materials on the NATO nuclear arsenal on Turkish territory.

The author has worked out in detail the activities of the military intelligence service of Bulgaria during the final period of the existence of the Warsaw bloc. The political triggers for the intensification of the work of intelligence officers in Czechoslovakia and China are indicated. In this regard, the facts of collecting

information about events in the PRC through the military attachés of third countries – India, Indonesia, as well as collecting information through the Hong Kong press are of interest. Y. Baev introduces into scientific circulation the most interesting reports of the military attaché of Bulgaria in China, Colonel Dimitar Mirchev (Baev 2019, 260). These materials show the high professional level of the Bulgarian military attachés, which was factually proved by the researcher.

The author notes in particular detail the activities of the Bulgarian military attachés during the "velvet revolutions" of 1989 – 1990 in Europe. Particular highlight is given to the events in Romania and Albania (Baev 2019, 266).

In our opinion, the fourth part of the book is of special interest. In this chapter, the author describes the modern history of the Bulgarian military intelligence from 1991 to 2018. Analysis is made of the stages of dismantling the old intelligence service of the Bulgarian army. The very difficult topic of studying modern problems and ways to solve them allows us to understand the author's talent, the ability to capture the main things in a huge array of official documents from the last quarter of a century of the Bulgarian history. The role of the Bulgarian intelligence service, studied by the author based on the tragic events associated with the wars on the territory of neighboring Yugoslavia in 1991 – 2001, is of interest for the researcher.

The issue of difficult transformations in the military-intelligence field connected with Bulgaria's accession to NATO did not escape the attention of the historian. The activities of military intelligence officers in relation to ensuring the official duties of the Bulgarian contingent in international peacekeeping operations are analyzed in detail. This helps to understand that the military intelligence service is important for Bulgaria and for its present-day international activity.

In his work, the author also studied the issue of the modern transformation of the military intelligence service of Bulgaria. The historian examines in detail the measures taken to transform the intelligence service after the fall of the communist regime. Particular attention is paid to the personnel work of the military intelligence service.

The new military intelligence priorities of Bulgaria, which include democratization, adaptation to cooperation with NATO (Baev 2019, 383) and monitoring of the Yugoslav civil war, are highlighted in detail in this chapter of the book. Y. Baev points out the attention of the intelligence service to the events in the territory of the former USSR. Of particular interest are the analyzed facts of the restoration of active intelligence activity of the Russian Federation in the Balkans and the political scandals associated with these events (Baev 2019, 324).

However, it is of no doubt, the main issue of the post-communist history of the military intelligence in Bulgaria is the process of establishing partnership relations between the special services of the NATO countries and Sofia, which took place in the 1990s and in the early 21st century. In this regard, it is extremely important to understand the information about the cooperation of the military intelligence

service of Bulgaria with the NATO special services during the war in Yugoslavia. Of particular interest is the role of the Bulgarian intelligence service in obtaining a secret plan for ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, known under the code name “Horseshoe”. The discussion about the informational provocation of planting the materials about the plans for ethnic cleansing of Serbs in Kosovo is still relevant. At the same time, Yordan Baev also studied in detail the facts of cooperation between the special services of NATO and Bulgaria in 1998 – 1999 (Baev 2019, 333).

Another interesting issue raised by the author is about the role of the military intelligence service in organizing the peacekeeping activities of the Bulgarian military contingents as part of the UN contingents since 1992 (Baev 2019, 342 – 343).

However, the most important scientific issue revealed by the author in this chapter is the issue of transformation of the military intelligence service as a result of the transformations that occurred in the 2000s. The information collected by the author on Bulgaria's participation in counter-terrorism operations in Afghanistan and Iraq and other countries is also of interest (Baev 2019, 347).

The author also touches on the sensitive issue of purges of the military intelligence service, and the personal struggle against the communist past by a number of employees in the special services. The debatable issues of the development of the military intelligence service in Bulgaria that occurred amid the complex processes of collapse of the old political system are revealed (Baev 2019, 371).

In the conclusions section, the author substantiates his opinion about a number of mistakes made during the implementation of reforms, thus confirming his active civil attitude (Baev 2019, 409).

It should be noted that the reprint of such a valuable study of the history of the present-day military intelligence service may allow the author to clarify some of the results of the work.

It would be interesting to use the method of comparison in assessing the activities of the Bulgarian military intelligence service with the activities of the special services of other Balkan states.

In our opinion, the episodes of interaction of the Bulgarian intelligence officers with non-communist countries – Greece, France – in the 1960 – 1980s have not been completely worked out. The materials related to this issue are to be supplemented by adding information on such issues: What benefits did such interaction actually bring to the Bulgarian military intelligence service? What dividends did Sofia receive from cooperation with the intelligence officers of the GDR, Hungary, and Cuba? What did intelligence officer missions to Lebanon and Syria result in? A more detailed study of these issues will complement the analysis of the professional level of the Bulgarians in the field of military intelligence (Baev 2019, 302).

In the process of working with the research materials, the historian comes to the necessity of raising important issues related to the intelligence activities of

the Bulgarian army. In his work Yordan Baev scrutinizes the contents of archival documents, the goals and priorities set by the army command and the political leadership of the republic before the military intelligence agencies. Yordan Baev professionally reveals the methodology of information collection used by the military intelligence, and, considers the specific gradation of the information collected by the Bulgarian intelligence officers in the Sofia intelligence centers.

Baev also makes active use of memoir sources. This makes it possible to clarify a number of episodes in the work, supplement formal service documents, and allows assessing the high professional level of the military historian.

Throughout the entire work Baev describes the transformation of the personnel policy of the political authorities with regard to the course and features of the appointment of leaders of the military intelligence officers (Baev 2019, 16, 139).

The study provides a clear picture of the political and military goals of the intelligence activities of the Bulgarian army, both during the period of Soviet rule in the country and afterwards.

The knowledge of the details and lines of the intelligence work indicates a deep understanding of operational and organizational work by the researcher, his knowledge of the organization of military intelligence activities, which is an important aspect of the scientific work of the researcher.

The only conclusion that can be arrived at upon completion of careful reading of the book under review is that the author managed to summarize the scientific material at a highly professional level and to create a study that allows you to look into the exciting world of the secret activities of the most important apparatus of the Bulgarian state - the military intelligence service.

Generally, the book by Yordan Baev is a significant contribution to the study of the history of the military intelligence service of the Bulgarian army. Thanks to the use of a rich source base and reference to the military-political history of the second half 20th century – early 21st century, the study allows to see the behind-the-scenes threads of the work of special services. The book is especially valuable because the author is not an amateur, but a venerable researcher who, through his work, has created a stable reputation as an authoritative historian of the military intelligence service of Bulgaria.

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