

Pliya Todev

Searching for New Dimensions: Post-Totalitarian Problems in the Iconography of Bulgarian National Revolutionaries

(Summary)

The article makes a critical review of three newly-formed perspectives from which Bulgarian national revolutionaries at the time of the Revival are viewed. The proponents of the first one suggest that they were terrorists, those of the second one claim that many of those figures, including Levski himself, were Masons, and for the proponents of the third one, who describe Bulgarian Revival as a “founder myth”, the revolutionaries are icons which scientific thought has to dethrone. The author doesn't contest the necessity for sustaining Bulgarian historical memory, for reduction, addition, reconsideration and reevaluation. Rather, his view is that all these have to be done in a responsible and professional way and he offers an alternative solution to the problems in the definition of the Bulgarian national revolutionaries caused by the transition to an open society. The revolutionaries of the Revival are heroes for Bulgarians because they contributed greatly to the restoration of the Bulgarian state. However, the evolutionists merit as much respect as the revolutionaries. The great achievement of the former was the long-lasting mobilization of the Bulgarians as a nation and their official recognition in the person of the Exarchate by powerful authorities. Without the reestablishment of the Bulgarian National Church in 1870, the revolutionary effort (including the Uprising of April) would have been in vain. If the revolutionary activities hadn't been in the name of an officially recognised nation, they could have been easily defined as sheer banditry by an international community, which, in stead of supporting its cause, would have condemned it. It is not necessary to

underestimate the revolutionaries or to extol the evolutionists in order to evaluate their importance; rather, there should be some rearrangement in the Bulgarian national pantheon.