INTRODUCTION

"...the good or bad fortune of men depends on
Whether their methods of acting accord with the
Character of the times ... And hence it results
That a man's fortunes vary, because times
Change and he does not change with them."

(Machiavelli)

Stefan Nikolov Stambolov (1854-1895), whose political fate mirrors the words of Machiavelli quoted above, is a rather unknown figure in the history of European political thought. However, in Bulgaria, he is now remembered a politician comparable in his historic significance for Bulgarian independence to Italy's Giuseppe Mazzini or Czechoslovakia's Thomas Garrigue Masaryk or Hungary's Ferenc Deák.

There are only two biographies available on Stambolov in English: the first by Beaman from 1895 and the second by Perry nearly 100 years later, from 1993. Personal acquaintance with Stambolov, Beaman's final account of the minister-

2 He was member of parliament for the Liberal Party from 1879 until 1884. In addition, he became elected vice-president and then president of the Sobranie, the National Assembly in 1884. Upon his resignation, Prince Alexander von Battenberg appointed Stambolov, Petko Karavelov and Sava Mutkurov as the triumvirate regency of Bulgaria. The regents ruled the principality until the election of Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg. Under the rule of Prince Ferdinand, Stambolov had held the position of minister-presidency from 1887 until 1894, when he was practically forced to resign. Stambolov's power as minister-president equaled the position of a Premier, which he himself used to refer to as his function. I shall therefore, following Stambolov, use both terms 'premier' and 'minister-president' with identical meanings. Macedonian terrorists murdered Stambolov in July 1895.
president's rule mirrors the specific historic difficulties of the first years of the independent Bulgarian principality:

In judging Stamboloff's life, the Western critic must take into consideration the surroundings amongst which he was bred and lived. If he ruled roughly, it was a rough people he had to deal with ... Amidst plots and conspiracies, surrounded by uncertain friends and open enemies, he was often obliged to strike swiftly. And when he struck, his hand was undoubtedly heavy. The best justification of his policy is to be found in the fact that his adversaries, who came in upon a condemnation of it, are following it as closely as they can.5

Perry's excellent political biography focuses on the international and domestic challenges the Prime Minister had to face. It is certainly the best biography of Stambolov that presents in depth the main political problems he had to deal with such as the influence of the Orthodox Church critical of the liberal constitution and the continuous Russian interference to the country's inner affairs and foreign policy.6 Perry's final account pictures Stambolov as a politician, who, due to his 'bourgeois' upbringing and his anti-Russian foreign policy, was not given the deserved historical credit under the communist regime.7

After 1989, Stambolov has been the subject of intensive scholarly interest. It was mainly Bulgarian historians who were eager to re-assess his political significance and role in Bulgarian state building.8

A considerable part of Stambolov's oeuvre is now available in Bulgarian. The Bulgarian Academy of Sciences has published Stambolov's personal archive in five volumes covering the period between 1886 and 1893.9 The archive consists

5 Beaman, p. 232.
7 Perry, p. 241