

POSUDEK BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

Jméno a příjmení studenta: Petra Knizova
Název bakalářské práce: Queen Victoria and the Great Famine in Ireland
Vedoucí bakalářské práce: Renata Jantkova, Ph.D.
Oponent bakalářské práce: Christopher E. Koy, Ph.D.

- I. Cíl práce a jeho naplnění: 2. Cíl práce byl naplněn s drobnými nedostatky
- II. Struktura práce: 1. Logická, jasná a přehledná
- III. Práce s literaturou: 2. Velmi dobrá práce s adekvátními prameny v patřičném rozsahu
- IV. Formální stránka: 1. Odpovídá všem stanoveným požadavkům
- VI. Jazyková úroveň práce: 1. Výborná
- VII. Náročnost zpracování tématu: 2. Vysoká

Vyjádření oponentního bakalářské práce:

The writing and effort to accomplish the goals of the thesis are evident: the author Miss Knizova has spent countless hours managing a multitude of historical texts as well as secondary histories, mostly British, to weave the story of the relations between the monarchy and the tragedy of the foreign land, Ireland over which Victoria reigned as Queen. There millions, her overwhelmingly Catholic Irish subjects, suffered over the course of the mid-1840s until the early 1850s from severe malnutrition which Ireland continued to be taxed in the form of fish and vegetables exported to England during this very period. Nicknamed in Ireland „the Famine Queen,” this thesis accurately portrays a thin-skinned leader with higher political ambitions who did not properly come to the assistance of those unfortunates who belonged to her domain. Instead, afraid that her “compassionate motherly” image might be stained, it is publicly known that a comparatively-remotely located Sultan was averted from offering a private donation four times above Victoria’s own measly £2000, and numerous other more generous donations would also be reduced to £1000 lest they too exceeded Queen Victoria’s „generosity.” Queen Victoria therefore reduced rather than enhanced Ireland’s much needed assistance, and she did so directly in other (unmentioned in this thesis) occasions as well. Besides the private donations, the modest contributions of the British government (loudly applauded as substantial by the English media as well as apologist English history scholars), further contributed to the misery and death of her mostly loyal Irish Catholic subjects. In her conclusion, Miss Knizova suitably

argues that the Famine and the parsimonious British response to it directly contributed to the Anglo-Irish War as well as the Irish Civil War which followed WWI as the rest of Europe (including Czechoslovakia) was freed from foreign domination or political control except in Ireland. Miss Knizova's English language diction is distinguished with notable rare mistakes; the structure, formatting and overall impression is evident of great industriousness. Nonetheless, I will now need to attend to some criticism.

The Catholic issue is hardly referred to at all, and it is prominent for the Famine and should have been addressed thoroughly. The Catholic Relief Act of 1829 did much more than allow Catholics to get elected to the House of Commons: it allowed the 90% of the inhabitants of Ireland to have for the first time democratic representation by allowing them to vote. Up until that point, only Protestant Irish (10% of the Irish population) could vote. Irish Catholics under this 1829 law could become policemen, be admitted to university and therefore become lawyers and also serve in the British military etc., all heretofore prohibited. The Catholic Relief Act undid the vicious Penal Laws enacted after the defeat of the last Catholic King James II at the Battle of the Boyne in what is now Northern Ireland on July 1, 1690.

The author is confused about authority, or at least contradicts herself: she refers to William IV and to Victoria at times regarding their political achievements ("King William IV abolished slavery") when in fact the House of Commons and PMs determine which acts to pass and what laws the monarchy is to sign into law, something Miss Knizova recognizes when she writes "Albert may have not realized that the monarch in England is just a figurehead, a pure symbol" (p. 11). At times the adoration of King George III sounds like royal historians had written that section of the bachelor thesis: to designate King George III a "very enlightened sovereign" (p. 5) is outrageous; he famously resisted - - out of personal wealth interests - - the abolishment of slavery. Another problem consists of the life led by royals generally. I quote: "Victoria had many toys, always had something to eat and a beautiful home" (top of p. 7) indicates that the author may not know anything at all about the extremely posh upbringing and lifestyle of British aristocrats generally, and royals in particular, when Miss Knizova writes this sentence in a thesis about the Irish Famine! There are more examples like this but the reader of this evaluation gets the point. It is interesting to not read any commentary or personal interpretation by Miss Knizova about William Lamb ("Lord Melbourne") tutoring Victoria and his sexual preference for flogging (p. 8) since he was "her first love" (p. 9); Likewise, Miss Knizova's profound understatement "it almost seemed that she had little interest in the condition of England" might have been applied to Ireland as well, later in the bachelor thesis, but a direct commentary is not forthcoming. It is clear that Victoria became lazy and nasty as a queen, and also identified herself with Germans. Not until the bottom of p. 20 do we read the first mention of the thesis topic; Miss Knizova's biographical and background of Victoria's succession history is too long.

I would like to repeat, should it not be abundantly clear: Catholics starved to death in Ireland in this Famine, not the privileged Protestants, so statements like "In 1845 the Famine struck, and the religious arguments were suddenly in the background" (p. 26) flies in the face of the point Miss Knizova makes that Queen Victoria primarily donated £2000 for relief aid because Protestants and Scots would be aided. The heavy lapses in the history of the Famine like this by Miss Knizova is the reason I could not be moved to award the grade EXCELLENT.

Yet I applaud Miss Knizova's brilliant reference of the philosophy of Adam Smith *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), crudely misapplied by Thomas Malthus, as in famines "should be used as a deterrent" (p. 31) and, in particular regard to the Queen herself, the paramount importance placed on Her Majesty not seeing starving Irish on her state visit to Ireland in 1849, so I am flexible regarding the final assessment, and thus look forward to her formal thesis defense.

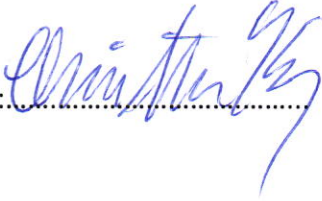
Práce splňuje základní požadavky kladené na tento typ prací, a proto ji doporučuji ústní obhajobě.

Navrhovaná známka: velmi dobře

Otázky k obhajobě:

1. Did Albert, liberally referred to in this thesis, do any Irish Famine relief work?

2. "One of the aims of the royal visit was to symbolically confirm British dominion over Ireland" & "No one paid attention to the Famine" (both p. 24). Is there any relevant history regarding this 1849 royal visit by Queen Victoria to Ireland and the still ongoing Famine?

Podpis vedoucího bakalářské práce: 

Datum: 12. 5. 2022