

REPORT

from Prof. D.Sc. Pepka Boyadjieva, Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, BAS concerning the publications of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Daniel Vachkov, participant in the competition for the academic post “Professor”, announced by the Institute for Historical Research at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in the professional field 2.2. History and Archeology, scientific specialty “History of Bulgaria” (New Bulgarian History – Economic and Social History of Bulgaria in the XX century), for the needs of the Department “New Bulgarian History”, in the “State Gazette”, issue. 66 of 24 July 2020

1. General characteristics of the scientific, expert and organisational activities of the candidate

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Daniel Vachkov is the only candidate in the competition announced by the Institute for Historical Research at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences for the academic post of “Professor” in the professional field 2.2. History and archeology, scientific specialty “History of Bulgaria” (New Bulgarian History – Economic and Social History of Bulgaria in the XX century), for the needs of the Department “New Bulgarian History”. The competition fully corresponds to the academic profile of the candidate, his scientific achievements, expert and organisational activities.

The materials for participation in the competition are presented legally, correctly and precisely. All publications with which Assoc. Prof. Vachkov participates in this competition were published after taking up the academic position of “Associate Professor”.

For participation in the competition Assoc. Prof. Daniel Vachkov presents the monograph “Accidents and catastrophes. Chronicle of Socialist Industrialization”, published in 2018, 4 chapters from collective monographs, 37 articles (some of them in English and French), 3 compilations, 3 textbooks co-authored. In terms of quantity, these publications exceed the requirements set out in the Academic Staff Development Act and related regulations.

The professional profile and the academic and public performances of Assoc. Prof. Vachkov impress with their high professionalism. His professional career is based on a reasonable balance between scientific, expert and organisational activities, in which the

commitment to each one of them is combined with preserved attention to others and upholding the high professional criteria.

2. Analysis of the applicant's scientific achievements

The main problem areas in which the research and scientific contributions of Assoc. Prof. Vachkov are concentrated are studies of industrial accidents and catastrophes in the period 1944-1989, the financial consequences of Bulgaria's participation in the wars 1912-1918, the banking modernization of Bulgaria in years after the Great Depression, the refugee problem in Bulgaria in the period between the two world wars and the role of individual economic actors for the economic development and modernization of the Bulgarian state.

Among the publications of Assoc. Prof. Vachkov, presented for participation in this competition, the monograph "Accidents and catastrophes. Chronicle of Socialist Industrialization" undoubtedly stands out. It is a precise historical study of industrial accidents and catastrophes during the communist period in Bulgaria, which allows to understand in depth the processes of (non) occurrence of socialist industrialization and modernization in our country.

The study of Assoc. Prof. Daniel Vachkov is multifaceted with clearly formulated and convincingly argued theses. It manages to successfully present the whole variety of aspects of industrial accidents and catastrophes – economic, social, legal, political. I will point out some of the specific achievements of the author, which I consider to be the most important scientific contributions.

First of all, I would like to highlight the approach of Assoc. Prof. Vachkov. His study is an attempt to understand a given social system through its failures. Researchers usually prefer successful initiatives and projects. The reviewed monograph convincingly demonstrates that failures are a very important methodological key to understanding the social environment in which they occur.

Second, Daniel Vachkov's monograph is not just a simple study of accidents and catastrophes in the industrial sphere during the communist regime. It is thinking *through*, it is exploring *beyond* accidents and catastrophes. In other words, the study of accidents and catastrophes in the industrial sphere actually goes beyond the industry's own problems to understand:

a) the specifics of industrialization and modernization during the communist period and their impact on social processes;

b) how the problems in the industry are used to build the totalitarian political system in Bulgaria and to establish universal control over the society by the Communist Party;

c) the essence of the communist system built in Bulgaria, from the point of view of its inherent governing mechanisms (the way of decision-making), as well as its internal abilities and capacity to function effectively and to cope with the challenges of the environment;

(d) the role of various organisations and institutions, such as trade unions and the media, as “co-authors” of the Communist Party policy and the consolidation of its power;

e) the ideological essence of the communist system in Bulgaria, which finds expression in the ideologizing of all social phenomena, including industrial accidents and incidents; the discrepancy between ideology and reality – between the ideology affirming the key role of working class in the socialist system and the real picture of the situation of workers in socialist factories;

f) the place of propaganda in the communist regime and the mechanisms used to create and preserve a positive image of the regime among the general public.

Thirdly, I appreciate the contribution of the adopted approach, in which all the studied events are “located”, correlated and explained through the broader context of the political and economic situation in the country in each period of its development. Thus, industrial accidents and catastrophes are “embedded” in the specific political and economic conditions created by the establishment of the new power after 9.09.1944 and the laying of the foundations of the communist political and economic system, the period of “pure” Stalinism, the time of limited de-Stalinization and the “great leap forward”, the reformist decade of the 1960s, the developed socialist society and the period of the collapse of communism in the second half of the 1980s. Placing the study of industrial accidents and catastrophes in a broader economic and social context allows both offering a reasoned explanation of why accidents and catastrophes become possible, and understanding the reactions to them at the level of government.

Fourth, in my opinion, an indisputable achievement of Assoc. Prof. Daniel Vachkov is that he offers us a scientific study that avoids the “trap” of sliding to broad generalizations and the “template” of easy and effective explanations, but tries to follow a differentiated approach in the analysis of the various cases of accidents and catastrophes.

Fifth, the main contribution of the monograph of Assoc. Prof. Daniel Vachkov is in revealing the real inevitability of industrial accidents and catastrophes in the conditions of the communist regime in Bulgaria and the practical inability of the system to react adequately and

minimize such incidents. This inevitability stems from the very nature and manner of social modernization / industrialization during the communist period.

3. Personal impressions from the applicant

Based on my personal impressions of the work and public appearances of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Daniel Vachkov, I can say with confidence that he has established himself as one of the prominent Bulgarian historians and social scientists. His creative productivity, organisational initiative and constructive attitude are very important for the development of the humanities and social sciences in our country.

4. Reasoned and clearly worded conclusion

Based on all the above statements about the scientific achievements, rich research, expert and organisational experience of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Daniel Vachkov, I strongly recommend to the members of the esteemed academic board and the Scientific Council of the Institute for Historical Research at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences to vote unanimously in support of the election of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Daniel Vachkov to the academic post of "Professor", in the professional field 2.2. History and archeology, scientific specialty "History of Bulgaria" (New Bulgarian History – Economic and Social History of Bulgaria in the XX century), for the needs of the Department "New Bulgarian History". The election of Assoc. Prof. Vachkov to the academic post of "Professor" will be not only a well-deserved recognition for his scientific achievements, but also essential for the future development of historical science in our country and the Institute for Historical Research.

Prof. D.Sc. Pepka Boyadjieva

16.11.2020

Sofia