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## OPINION

by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Stefan Minkov, Shumen University,

Regarding the application of the following candidates for the academic position of ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR at the Institute for Historical Research at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in Professional Field 2.2. History and Archeology, scientific specialty History of Bulgaria (The Macedonian Question in the Bulgarian-Albanian Relations in the period 1878–1944) for the needs of “History of the Bulgarian National Question” section

The procedure has been announced in the State Gazette (110) dated 29 December 2020. Two candidates have submitted their documents: assist. prof. Dr. Voyn Konstantinov Bozhinov and assist. prof. Dr. Georgi Nikolov Georgiev. The information on the Scientometric indicators certifies that both meet the requirements for the academic position of Associate Professor.

Assist. Prof. Dr. Bozhinov presents as a habilitation thesis (according to the submitted List of Publications) the monograph *The Governing of May-19<sup>th</sup> people from May 19th, 1934 to January 22nd, 1935* (published in 2017, 247 pages). In addition, two more monographs are presented (*The Republic of Macedonia in Contemporary Geopolitics*, Sofia, 2017, 314 pages and *Socialist Yugoslavia in Agony 1980 - 1989*, Sofia, 2019, 314 pages). The list also includes monographs based on the defended dissertation, 39 studies and articles, 2 chapters in collective monographs. In the reference of scientific contributions, apart from the above-mentioned monographs and chapters in collective monographs, contributions are indicated in two more monographic works authored by the candidate: *Nationally Powerful and United Bulgaria. The Institutions of the Radical Right and the National Question*, Sofia, 2014, 273 pages (co-authored with Nikolai Poppetrov) and *Socialist Yugoslavia in Disintegration 1989 - 1992*, Sofia, 2021, 280 pages. The difference between the cited scientific papers in the List of Publications and in the Reference of Scientific Contributions makes it difficult to determine the framework of research to be reviewed, so I will stick to what the candidate has indicated in another (broader in content) accompanying document - Summaries of scientific publications.

Assist. Prof. Dr. Georgiev presents as a habilitation thesis the monograph *Bulgarian-Albanian Political Relations (1908–1915)*, Sofia, 2019, 468 pages; a book based on the defended dissertation is also presented. The studies and articles after the acquisition of PhD and after the academic position Assistant Professor are 29. In addition, the candidate presents three paragraphs of books, which he authored, as well as three documentary collections of which he is a co-author.

The scientific output of both candidates is impressive, both in terms of the amount of published research and in terms of quality, which I will comment on below. However, the quantitative indicators are important only insofar as they are necessary to meet the minimum requirements for applying for the scientific title of Associate Professor. They can also be taken into account when other indicators are aligned.

The scientific output of Assist. Prof. Dr. Bozhinov covers several problematic areas of research interest, which can be defined as follows: the political system and politics of

Bulgaria after the First World War with an emphasis on the 30s and early 40s of 20th century, the disintegration of Yugoslavia, contemporary aspects of the “Macedonian question”, the life and ideas of famous people in Bulgarian history (Andrei Lyapchev, Alexander Tsankov, Kiril Drangov, Ivan Mihailov, Dominic Murphy). He has single studies related to problems before 1918. The interdisciplinary approach and methods used by Bozhinov are notable, especially in the geopolitical analysis of contemporary historical problems, of politics as a science and a tool for understanding historical structures and processes.

The habilitation thesis *The Governing of May-19th people from May 19th, 1934 to January 22, 1935* is a serious study of a historical period that still needs reassessment and overcoming of the decades-old stereotypes of interpretation. The author enters deeply into a debatable issue, using a significant number of sources and research. The first chapter can be defined as introductory, but it is the necessary basis on which the author builds the structure of the story for the period after the May 19th coup to early 1935. He analyzes the place of the Turnovo Constitution in the development of Bulgarian statehood, the monarchical institution, the National Assembly, the Council of Ministers and the Bulgarian parties. In the second chapter: *The way to May 19th. Who initiated the radical change? The coup and the reasons for its success*, Bozhinov very successfully, in my opinion, systematizes the factors that led to the radical political change. The activity of the Military Union and “Zveno” circle is studied in the specific and changing post-war situation defined by the author as “the swan song of bourgeois democracy”. The third chapter presents the governing of the May-19th people, and in my opinion, it is more logical to consider their ideology before the presentation of the political events, the staff changes, the transformations in other public spheres and foreign politics during the study period. The author shows interesting observations on the relations between the monarch and the new regime, which ultimately led to the fall of Kimon Georgiev’s government. The comparison with similar political regimes (Poland, Yugoslavia, Portugal) expands the possibility of analyzing the political situation in Europe on the eve of the Second World War.

From the other presented studies I would like to note the especially significant scientific contributions of the monograph, which is co-authored with Nikolay Poppetrov (*Nationally Powerful and United Bulgaria. The Institutions of the Radical Right and the National Question*). Especially interesting to me are the comparison and analysis of the different approaches in solving the Bulgarian national question and overcoming some historiographical stereotypes.

The two monographs on Macedonia in contemporary geopolitics (the second, co-authored with Yordanka Stoyanova-Toneva) present a similar interpretation of the current state of the “Macedonian question”, with the text bearing the characteristics of popular historical literature, which does not contradict my other opinion that Bozhinov took seriously the researched problems and used a significant number of documents and sources, and made authoritative and substantiated summaries and analyses.

The monographs on the crisis and the beginning of Yugoslavia’s disintegration after Tito’s death (the first for the period 1980-1989 and the second for the period 1989-1992) logically trace the events leading up to the escalation of the conflict in the early 1990s and the battles at Vukovar in the Yugoslav-Croatian war. However, the author does not limit himself to chronological tracing of events and seeks the roots of the problems related to the crisis in

Yugoslavia back in time, with the emphasis again on Macedonia. This is logical, given the fact that Dr. Bozhinov mainly uses documents from the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, many of which were the first in scientific circulation, but he also uses an interesting and original approach to the interpretation of the events and facts.

His articles examine specific problems, many of which were later included in the monographic studies. Above were outlined the problem areas that fall within the field of Bozhinov's research interest. In view of the limitations to which this opinion must comply, I will mention here only a few accents: in one of the articles the author makes a curious comparison between the "personal regimes" of Tsar Ferdinand and Boris III. The author's interpretations could be discussed extensively, but the central problem - the difference in the conditions in which the two monarchs rule - is convincingly presented. The reassessment of the historiographical "myth", as defined by the author, about the reign of Tsar Boris III, is an original author's reading of the facts and events of this historical period. And the second article I want to focus on is "Bulgarian historical literature on the Ohrid Uprising", published in the edition, dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the event. We can notice the punctual presentation of the historical research, combined with analysis and critical reading of some historiographical interpretations.

The scientific output of Assist. Prof. Dr. Voyn Bozhinov is impressive, both in terms of quantity and quality of historical interpretations and significant scientific contributions. However, I would give preference to the research related to the interwar period, with the political structures in the defined as right-wing politics and the triad State - parties - personalities, constituting the Bulgarian history during this interesting and multifaceted historical period. The habilitation work is definitely contributive because for the first time in Bulgarian historiography the government of the May-19<sup>th</sup> people has been studied in detail, searching for and finding their ideological basis and the factors that led to their coming to power.

The scientific output of Assist. Prof. Dr. Georgiev covers the following problem areas: the "Macedonian question" in its broad scope as a national liberation movement, ideology, personalities, program documents of various organizations, the refugee problem, etc., Bulgarian-Albanian relations and in a broader sense - the new history of the Albanians and Albania, local lore (regional history). Georgiev participated as an author of paragraphs in the writing of two regional histories - *Razlog. History, traditions, memory* (Blagoevgrad, 2009) and *History of Dupnitsa and Dupnitsa region* (Sofia, 2015). This is of extreme significance because when writing such historical research, in addition to being hard work, it is of great importance for the formation of Bulgarian historical memory. The candidate's participation in the compilation of collected documentary papers is a difficult, often ungrateful, but extremely necessary job, in view of the development of Bulgarian historical science. Georgiev is the compiler of the following documentary collections: *100 years of the Ohrid-Debar Uprising* (Sofia, 2014), *Sources of the Balkan War* (Sofia, 2015), *The Bulgarians and the Great War* collected documentary papers (Sofia, 2016).

The habilitation thesis of the candidate *Bulgarian-Albanian political relations (1908 - 1915)* is a basic study of Bulgarian historical science because it expands the context in which the Bulgarian national question is studied and includes another important factor - that of the Albanian influence on it. The monograph is written in the best traditions of Bulgarian

historiography, using extensive documentary material, which is necessary given the fact that so far the problem has not been given comprehensive historical interpretation. Consecutively, separate chapters examine the ideas of the Bulgarian-Albanian agreement from Hurriyet to the Balkan War, the Bulgarian-Albanian relations during the two Balkan wars, the Bulgarian-Albanian uprising of 1913 and its consequences (humanitarian and ethno-demographic), the “transformation” of the Macedonian question after the wars and the “Albanian factor” in the Bulgarian-Turkish relations with an emphasis on the Bulgarian diplomatic mission in Albania and the politics of imposing Bulgarian influence there, and the limit in time is Bulgaria’s intervention in the First World War. The thread of the narrative and at the same time, the main conceptual contribution, is the author’s thesis, and its successful defense, that various centers of Bulgarian politics (diplomatic service, military department, IMRO) realize the need for a strategic ally in solving the national problem and see it in the Albanian national movement. The process of Bulgarian-Albanian cooperation is considered in detail at all its stages; the emphasis on the joint uprising in 1913 is clearly justified and based on facts. Due to the intertwining of the national claims, it was interesting to me how Georgiev followed the bilateral negotiations for territorial delimitation. An important contribution is the tracing of “Albanian politics” in Bulgaria, as the Bulgarian foreign politics is built on the conceptual basis formulated by Alexander Protogerov. The influence of the IMRO has been studied in detail not only on the Bulgarian foreign politics, but also on the concrete diplomatic steps taken, including the protection and expansion of the rights of the Bulgarian minority in the new Albanian state. The author objectively considers the factors that led to the failure of these politics. Negotiations with the Central Powers in the initial stage of the First World War and the idea of a personal Bulgarian-Albanian union under the scepter of Tsar Ferdinand are the next important contributions of the author. In the assessment of the habilitation work of Georgi Georgiev should not be missed its repeated citation by researchers, which is the most objective indicator of its scientific value. The citations confirm my claim that the monograph provides a solid ground for continuing the historiographical interpretations for the period from the Young Turk Revolution to the First World War, especially on the Macedonian question.

The studies and articles presented are mostly primary publications, both on the topic of the habilitation work and on the national movement in Kyustendil region at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. In a broader sense, the candidate’s scientific output is focused on the Macedonian question until the First World War.

#### Conclusion:

- Both candidates meet the minimum scientometric requirements for the academic position of Associate Professor. They use two different techniques in presenting the historical narrative - traditional, problem-chronological in Georgiev, modern, closer to the popularizing narrative in Bozhinov. These are different authorial styles; both - correct and necessary for the Bulgarian historical science
- The scientific contributions in the presented historical research are significant: those of Bozhinov are in a broader problematic and chronological scope, and Georgiev focused on the Macedonian question and the Bulgarian-Albanian relations in the late 19th and early 20th century;

- The scientific output of Georgi Georgiev fully fits into the topic of the procedure for the academic position of Associate Professor - The Macedonian question in Bulgarian-Albanian relations 1878-1944, while that of Voyn Bozhinov is rather peripheral to the topic;
- The other advantage of the candidacy of Assist. Prof. Dr. Georgiev is his co-authorship in writing regional history and his participation as a compiler in documentary collections.

Based on these conclusions and due to the need for this opinion to end up with a clear suggestion, I propose to the jury to rank the candidates for the academic position of Associate Professor in Area of Higher Education 2. Humanities, Professional field 2.2. History and Archeology, scientific specialty History of Bulgaria (The Macedonian Question in Bulgarian-Albanian Relations 1878–1944) as follows:

1. Assist. Prof. Dr. Georgi Nikolov Georgiev;
2. Assist. Prof. Dr. Voyn Konstantinov Bozhinov.

3.04.2021  
Shumen

Signature:  
(assoc. prof. Dr. S. Minkov)