

OPINION

by Assoc. Prof. Yura Konstantinova, DSc.

in connection with the competition for the academic position of
"Associate Professor",

announced by the Institute for Historical Research – BAS

In no. 110 of the State Gazette of December 29, 2020, a competition was announced for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the professional field 2.2. "History and Archeology", scientific specialty "History of Bulgaria" ("National Liberation Movement of Macedonian and Thracian Bulgarians" (1878-1919 ") for the needs of the section "History of the Bulgarian National Question" - Institute for Historical Research, BAS. Two candidates were admitted to the competition - Chief Assistant Dr. Voyn Bozhinov and Chief Assistant Dr. Slavi Slavov.

Dr. Voyn Bozhinov is a graduate of the Faculty of History at Sofia University, where in 2005 he defended his doctoral dissertation on "Andrei Lyapchev - politician, statesman, public figure", after which he began working at the Institute for Historical Research. He participated in the competition with six monographs, four of which were independent ("The Government of the May 19th Movement, May 19, 1934 - January 22, 1935." S., 2017; "Republic of Macedonia in Contemporary Geopolitics". S., 2017, Socialist Yugoslavia in agony 1980-1989. S., 2019 and "Socialist Yugoslavia in disintegration 1989-1992." S., 2021) and two co-authored "Nationally Powerful and United Bulgaria. The formations of the radical right and the national question. " S., 2014 in co-authorship with Nikolay Poppetrov and "The Republic of Macedonia in Contemporary Geopolitics and the Place of the Bulgarian National Interest There". S., 2018 in co-authorship with Yordanka Stoyanova-Toneva). Dr. Bozhinov has submitted another 39 scientific articles for participation in the competition, and from the attached list of publications it is clear that he is the author of two more monographs written on the basis of his dissertation.

Dr. Bozhinov highlights as his main habilitation work his study "The Management of the May 19th Movement, May 19, 1934 - January 22, 1935." S., 2017. The work deepens and expands the knowledge about the May 19th Movement power by placing it in the context of the political government of Bulgaria before the coup of May 19, 1934 and looking for its parallels outside the country. The book traces in detail the nine months of ruling of the May 19th Movement, emphasizes on its ideology and questions the consequences of its interference into politics. This monograph deepens and consolidates the activities of its author with the circle "Unit", which falls within the scope of his interests in the work on the monograph "Nationally Powerful and United Bulgaria. The formations of the radical right and the national question. " S., 2014. In this issue Dr. Bozhinov develops the topics discussing several other far-right organizations operating in Bulgarian political life in the interwar

period, as well as the part dedicated to the Bulgarian national question in the same chronological period.

The other monographic researches, as well as a large part of the articles presented for participation in the competition, outline several main circles among the research interests of Dr. Bozhinov. Among them is the consistently developed topic of Bulgarian-Serbian / Yugoslav relations, which in recent years has grown into a study of the processes taking place in Yugoslavia from the death of Josip Broz Tito to the collapse of the state in 1992. This broad topic provides the context in which to place the study of another, central to the interests of Dr. Bozhinov problem - the place of the Republic of Macedonia in modern geopolitics. It was developed, on the one hand, from the point of view of the place of the Republic of Macedonia in the complex relations in the multinational socialist Yugoslavia, and, on the other hand, in connection with the international relations in the Balkans and in the world.

The three main thematic circles - the right-wing organizations in Bulgaria in the interwar period, the interethnic relations in socialist Yugoslavia and the Macedonian question in the interstate relations at the end of the XX and the beginning of the XXI century - do not exhaust Dr. Bozhinov's research interests. Among his publications can be found articles dedicated to the Young Turk revolution, the declaration of Bulgarian independence, Bulgarian-Ottoman relations on the eve of the First World War and others. Apart from the wide thematic and chronological range of the research, the "historical-polemical character" (the definition is by Dr. Bozhinov) of a large part of the considered works also deserves attention. The author does not bother to state and defend his position on the researched issues. His scientific production is readable, often aimed at a wider audience, which would be intrigued by the proposed contemporary projections on historical topics. Dr. Bozhinov's research presents him as a scientist with interests in the study of international relations and contemporary political processes. He has a significant number of publications in foreign languages, which, along with his project at the Diplomatic Institute of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is proof of his interest in contemporary issues and his understanding that the views of Bulgarian historians should be promoted outside the country.

Dr. Slavi Slavov is a graduate of the University of Veliko Tarnovo "St. St. Cyril and Methodius ", and his subsequent professional development is entirely related to the Institute for Historical Research, BAS, where he is a full-time doctoral student, research associate and chief assistant. Dr. Slavov participated in the competition with a major habilitation thesis on "IMARO between Hurriyet's Fanfares and the Roar of Cannons (1908–1912)", published in 2018, with three publications in two documentaries and 44 independent scientific articles, issued after the defense of his dissertation.

Dr. Slavov's scientific interests are concentrated around the state and development of the Internal Macedonian-Adrianople Revolutionary Organization in the period 1903-1912. The sequence with which the candidate deals with various aspects of this topic is impressive. The basis of his doctoral dissertation, which later became the monograph "IMARO from Ilinden to the Balkan War (1903-1912)", published in 2016, is the issue of financing the revolutionary organization by the Bulgarian state. This topic is also covered in the later

publications of Dr. Slavov, but as part of the broader problem of the influence of the Bulgarian state on the state of the IMARO. In fact, the context of relations between the IMARO and the Bulgarian state is absolutely necessary to understand the many Balkan contradictions that emerged in the early twentieth century and left a lasting imprint on the fate of the region. Of course, this context is far from unique - IMARO and its activities are part of the complex processes taking place in the late Ottoman Empire, regional and international relations, the emerging leftist ideologies, etc. It is commendable that Dr. Slavov is expanding the scope of his activities by including in his research Serbian documents, which give a different point of view to the problems he studies.

At first glance, the topic of the Internal Macedonian-Adrianople Revolutionary Organization seems to have been thoroughly studied in Bulgarian and foreign historiography. However, a closer look at it shows that it needs an impartial, distant and critical view based on a solid documentary base. Such is the case in the works of Dr. Slavov, who calmly and without pomposity communicates unknown facts and develops his theses without being enslaved to stereotypes imposed in historiography. His work is characterized by insight into details, breaking schemes and a nuanced insight on the views, actions and contradictory relations between various revolutionary and political figures. This is possible thanks to the introduction into scientific circulation of new or partially used archival material.

Dr. Slavov's works are of a documentary nature. This is evident from his participation in two documentaries (Sources for the Balkan Wars and The Bulgarians and the Great War), as well as from his publications dedicated to the Sarafov Movement in the IMARO (mainly the articles "Sarafism as a Current in the Internal Macedonian Adrianople Revolutionary Organization" and "Relations between the Interim Committee of Boris Sarafov and the Serbian Government: An Attempt at Reconstruction"). The candidate's participation in projects aimed at finding and publishing documents, in addition to being extremely useful, also shows the importance he attaches to historical sources. In connection with the documents sought within these projects, scientific publications were made - "The cholera epidemic in the Bulgarian army during the First Balkan War", "The danger of Russian landings on the Bulgarian Black Sea coast in 1915-1916: real or imaginary", etc., which present poorly familiar aspects of famous historical events. The candidate's participation in a number of regional publications is impressive, which contributes to the consolidation of historical knowledge in the country.

The review of the works with which Dr. Bozhinov and Dr. Slavov participate in the competition, as well as the provided evidence of their career development, participation in projects, scientific forums, scientific contributions, open citations, etc., allow to conclude categorically, that both meet and exceed the minimum requirements for the academic position of "associate professor". In addition to meeting the formal requirements of the law, the colleagues who appeared in the competition have the qualities of independent researchers with a high level of competence in their research fields. They would certainly contribute to the staff strengthening of the section "History of the Bulgarian National Question" at the Institute for Historical Research, BAS. As far as the announced competition for the scientific specialty "History of Bulgaria" has a sub-topic "National Liberation Movement of the

Macedonian and Thracian Bulgarians (1878-1919)", I believe that the research profile of Dr. Slavi Slavov to a much greater extent meets the desired specialist. This gives me reason to make the following ranking in the selection for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in this competition:

1. Ch. Assistant Prof. Dr. Slavi Slavov
2. Ch. Assistant Prof. Dr. Voyn Bozhinov

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