

OPINION

of Associate professor Dr. Alexander Grebenarov from the Institute for Historical Studies – BAS, member of the scientific jury for the appointment of the academic position "Associate Professor" in professional field 2.2. History and archaeology, scientific specialty "History of Bulgaria" (Bulgarian diplomacy (1879 – 1944) for the needs of the "New Bulgarian History" section, Institute for Historical Studies – BAS, according to a competition announced in the State Gazette (issue 63 of 06.08.2022).

Two participants submitted documents for the competition – Ch. Assistant Professor Dr. Aleka Strezova and Ch. Assistant Professor Dr. Voyn Voyn Bozhinov.

1. **Ch. Assistant Professor Dr. Aleka Strezova** has submitted two monographs for the competition, one of which is a habilitation thesis "Last of its kind. Dr. Georgi Voulkovich (1833–1892)", V. Tarnovo, 2022, 480 p., author's texts from other 2 collective monographs, 26 studies and articles, 4 documentary publications, list of cited, etc.

The habilitation thesis, dedicated to the famous Bulgarian diplomat, politician, public figure and military doctor Georgi Voulkovich, structurally contains an introduction, three chapters, a concluding part and appendices. The multiple subheadings to each paragraph not only guide, but also arouse the reader's curiosity about the author's text. Georgi Valkovich, defined by Dr. Strezova as an actor from two eras, is difficult to research, due to his diverse activities and often changing environment, due to training, professional and public commitment. Another characterological feature of the actor, revealed in the exhibition, is that he does not remain a mute witness to what is happening - where he can influence even in the most complicated situations, he looks for a way out, offers alternative solutions. Voulkovich got to know the life of the Ottoman subjects and the mentality of the officials from the highest levels of power. Regardless of his rise in professional terms and the occupation of positions of high status in the Ottoman Empire in the period up to 1877, the work shows his desire to support the Bulgarian educational, ecclesiastical and revolutionary work. Along with the unknown facts about Voulkovich's activities during this period, the data given about his activities are of interest to science after 1878. The senior administrative positions held by him in Eastern Rumelia and the Principality of Bulgaria, incl. and as a minister, give an idea of the state problems in them. The actor 's participation in their institutional construction, his

projects for imposing modernized management models, his active personal and official communication are examined in the book with accompanying analyses.

Tracing the professional and life biography of Georgi Voulkovich, Dr. Strezova presents various aspects of the life of the Bulgarians in the Ottoman Empire, examines the intervention of foreign and domestic political factors in the management of Eastern Rumelia and their influence on the politics of the Principality of Bulgaria, analyzes events of a state-political nature, shows the cooperation of the native diplomacy to protect the Bulgarian national interests, incl. to preserve the Bulgarian language in Macedonia through the Bulgarian Exarchate, etc. In fact, the exhibition is largely a history of Bulgaria and the Bulgarians in the Ottoman Empire through the eyes of a Bulgarian diplomat. It is supported by rich historical sources, not a few of which enter scientific circulation for the first time. Data from documentary publications, scientific studies and information from the Internet were ethically used.

In the entirely valuable work, some recommendations can be made – a certain belittling of the contribution of the exarchial officials, as well as of the aspirations of the local Bulgarian population in Macedonia to obtain berets, is noticeable, at the expense of Voulkovich's role in this matter. It is not unimportant, but it seems to be overrated. A recommendation can also be directed to the photographic material, which undoubtedly diversifies and complements the reading. In the case of individual illustrations, additional texts in the pictures should be "cleared", regardless of their authenticity, because they are often part of another story.

The second monograph of Dr. A. Strezova "Bulgarian diplomacy. Institutions and representatives. 1879–1918" has a scientific and applied nature. It contains a text of a research nature, revealing the development of the diplomatic network of the Principality of Bulgaria, its management, financing, structure, staffing, rules, criteria for selecting newly appointed personnel, etc. The work advocates the changes after the declaration of the Independence of Bulgaria (1908), reflecting the status of the commercial representations, the biographies of the diplomats of the new Bulgaria are presented in an appendix, accompanied by portrait photos and bibliographic references.

Part of Dr. Strezova's remaining production covers a wide range of research on persons and events, another concerns the institutional history of Bulgarian diplomacy from the dawn of the modern Bulgarian state to 1944, the published historical sources and genealogical studies are also valuable for science. I find the reference to research contributions real, even minimized.

Ch. Assistant Professor Dr. Voyn Bozhinov, submitted for the competition the book "The Governing of the organizers of the Bulgarian coup d'état (May 19, 1934 – January 22, 1935)", S., 2017, 248 pp. marked as habilitation, other 5 monographs, parts of 2 collective monographs, 39 studies and articles, list of citations, etc.

The book "The Governing of the organizers of the Bulgarian coup d'état (May 19, 1934 – January 22, 1935)" includes an introduction, five chapters, a conclusion and appendices. The initial part of the study is focused on the institutions conceived by the adoption of the Tarnovo Constitution (1879). Particular attention is paid to the political aspirations for legislative changes related to the functioning and prerogatives of the parliament, the monarchical institute and the council of ministers, a critical analysis of some shortcomings in the basic law of the state is made. In his work, Dr. Bozhinov shows the attitudes of party leaders after 1919 to fundamentally change the legislative structure. Projects to change, or rather to abolish, the constitution remained a dream until the spring of 1934, when on May 19 the Military Union and the Political Circle "Zveno" staged a coup d'état. The monograph examines in detail the reasons for this act, as well as the resulting consequences – the National Assembly was suspended, political parties were banned, restrictions were imposed on the manifestations of the national liberation movement, VMRO was disbanded, some of its leaders were arrested, others were sentenced in absentia.

The book shows the reforms in local self-government, special attention is paid to the newly created state institution – the Directorate for Public Renewal, the attempts at judicial reform, the role of the monarch, the actions of former party leaders, etc. are traced. Internationally, the efforts of the rulers to bring the country out of the isolation ring, which has been unbroken since 1919, through a rapprochement with Belgrade, are examined. The monograph broadens the horizons of the topic, which for a long time has not been among the "most favorite" of researchers.

Notes to the book: the introduction lacks a historiographical overview of the subject, which would highlight the author's contributions; the large volume of the first chapter creates an unnecessary imbalance, especially since it goes beyond the scope of the title; a number of modern studies and documentary sources have not been used, providing more reliable data than the periodical information often used by the author, which is not always reliable.

Along with the two monographs that trace the life and works of the famous politician from Resen, Andrey Lyapchev, published on the basis of the dissertation work defended in 2005, three books are among the publications. Two of them are related to the history of the Republic of Macedonia before and after the collapse of Socialist Yugoslavia. The third follows the development of state-political processes and public attitudes in the young country until 2017, an assessment of Bulgarian foreign policy is made in relation to the aggressive behavior of Skopje towards the Bulgarian cultural and historical heritage. The monographs are valuable from a political point of view, they show the analytical skills of the author, but they are far from the chronological-thematic framework of the announced competition.

Dr. Bozhinov's participation in the collective monograph "Nationally powerful and united Bulgaria. The formations of the radical right and the national question", S. 2014, as the title suggests, is focused on formations from the right-wing political spectrum. The author's text, examining their ideology, structure and manifestations, is of a contributing nature.

Subject of research in Dr. Bozhinov's studies and articles are other plots from the new Bulgarian history. As events, problems from the Young Turk coup and the Independence of Bulgaria, the Ohrid-Debar uprising, the world wars are studied with a view to the Bulgarian national question. There are author's contributions in his research, which affect the Bulgarian-Yugoslav relations, as well as in the articles dealing with the problems in the modern Turkish foreign policy and the Georgian-Ossetian conflict, but they go beyond the topic of the competition. His publications about personalities who left a mark in Bulgarian history also deserve attention. A special place among them is occupied by the monarchs - Prince/Tsar Ferdinand and Tsar Boris III, the American diplomat who played an important role at the end of the First World War – Dominic Murphy , among them are also the prominent leaders of the VMRO – Ivan Mihailov and Kiril Drangov.

Conclusion

The report on the scientometric indicators for academic positions, presented by Dr. A. Strezova , shows that he has a total of 645 points, and the other participant in the competition, Dr. V. Bozhinov – 1690 points. In contrast to Dr. Strezova 's publications, which, with few exceptions, fully correspond to the announced theme of the competition, to the issues and chronological scope of the "New Bulgarian History" section, aimed at "studying the various historical

processes from the time of the Third Bulgarian State" , with Dr. Bozhinov the situation is different. Out of a total of 6 of his monographs, three of them and several articles refer to Balkan history and not to new Bulgarian history. They do not correspond to the investigated problems with which the section deals and go beyond the chronological and thematic scope of the competition. Two other monographs were promulgated on the basis of a dissertation work defended in 2005. As for the 6th monograph "The Governing of the organizers of the Bulgarian coup d'état (May 19, 1934 – January 22, 1935)" discussed above and presented for habilitation thesis, the case is more special. According to Appendix 1 , Table 2, item 1 of the Notes in the Rules for the conditions and procedure for acquiring scientific degrees and for holding academic positions at the Institute for Historical Studies at the BAS, the monograph cannot be defined as a habilitation thesis because it does not meet the condition "yes and no scientific editor and/or scientific reviewers". In conclusion, I find that the candidate for the academic position "Associate Professor", Dr. Bozhinov, did not comply with the current legal provision, with the issues and chronological scope of the "New Bulgarian History" section, and with the topic of the competition.

The stated arguments give me the reason to make the following arrangement for the occupation of the academic position "Associate Professor" in professional direction 2.2. History and Archaeology, scientific specialty "History of Bulgaria" (Bulgarian Diplomacy (1879 – 1944) for the needs of the "New Bulgarian History" section at the Institute for Historical Studies – BAS:

1. Ch. Assistant Professor, PhD Aleka Alexandrova Strezova
2. Ch. Assistant Professor, Ph.D Voyn Konstantinov Bozhinov

08.12.2022

Assoc. Dr. Alexander Grebenarov