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R E P O R T

on the scientific production and other scientific activities of Ass. Prof. Dr. Irina Grigorova, participant in the competition for the academic post of "Assoc. Professor" in scientific specialty 2.2. History and Archaeology, specialty "Contemporary Bulgarian History", for the needs of the Institute for Historical Studies, announced by the State Gazette, # 46 of 2026 by Prof. Iskra Baeva PhD, Lecturer in Contemporary History at the Faculty of History, Sofia University „Kliment Ohridski"

The candidate for the academic position of "associate professor" Dr. Irina Grigorova presents herself in the competition with a serious research biography, participation in scientific events and projects, and a long list of scientific publications.

1. Personal data of the contest participant

Irina Grigorova graduated from the "Ioan Exarch" Language School in Vratsa with a degree in French, then enrolled in the "History" at the Faculty of History of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", which she graduated in 2002, and received a master's degree from the same faculty in 2003 after defending a master's thesis on the topic "The Schuman Plan. Creation of the European Coal and Steel Community". Her interest in French history continued during her doctoral studies at the Institute for Historical Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. In 2008, she defended her dissertation "Bulgarian-French Relations during the Presidency of General de Gaulle (1958-1969)" and became a doctor of history.

After defending her dissertation, Irina Grigorova continued her professional career at the Institute for Historical Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, and since 2011 she has been elected as a chief assistant professor, a member of the Institute's Scientific Council as a representative of young scientists, as well as a member of the Institute's Accreditation Commission, and scientific secretary of the "Contemporary Bulgarian History" section.

2. General characteristics of the habilitation thesis

The habilitation work of Dr. Irina Grigorova is the book "Bulgaria in the Foreign Policy of France during the Cold War" (published by the Academic Publishing House "Prof. Marin

Drinov” in 2026). As the author stated in the Introduction, her book is dedicated to “France’s relations with Eastern Europe and the Balkans, especially Bulgaria, during the Cold War” (p. 11).

Since Bulgarian-French relations have been relatively well researched, including by her, Irina Grigorova has turned the focus of her research to presenting the positions and actions not of the Bulgarian side, but vice versa - French policy mainly towards Bulgaria, but not only towards our country, but also towards the countries of Eastern Europe (the Balkans and Central Europe) in general. The expansion of the geographical scope of French foreign policy has given the author the opportunity to conduct a comparative analysis, but it seems to me that this opportunity has not been fully realized, since the parts dedicated to French policy towards other countries in the region remain largely isolated from the overall text and run parallel to the policy towards Bulgaria. The second goal of the book is also related to the geographical expansion of the topic: "to assess Bulgaria's place in French foreign policy during the Cold War on a broader background, making comparisons and looking for similarities and differences with other countries in Eastern Europe and the Balkans" (p. 41).

For the writing of her habilitation, Dr. Irina Grigorova used 225 scientific publications, 16 unpublished master's theses and doctoral dissertations, documents from three archives (one French and two Bulgarian), four documentary collections, 14 memoir publications and 47 publications used from electronic sources of various nature. The attraction of research by young scientists that has not yet been published is particularly impressive.

The book has a volume of 292 pages and is structured in Introduction, four chapters, Appendix, Conclusion, Epilogue, Bibliography and a summary in English. As befits a historian, the book follows mainly the chronological principle, with individual problematic stories (case studies) sometimes interwoven into it. Leading in the development of the structure are the positions and role of France in international relations during the Cold War, and in short, after it, the efforts and actions of France to play as much as possible a role in Eastern European countries (but not only in those of the Eastern Bloc, but also Greece and Turkey). But before presenting the conclusions reached by Irina Grigorova in the main text, I would like to dwell on the extensive introduction, which presents the prehistory of the French penetration of the Balkans and Bulgaria. I highly appreciate this text, as it helps readers, especially those outside historical circles, to understand the traditions of the French presence in our country.

Since the approach of Dr. Irina Grigorova is to present history from a French perspective, the four main chapters follow both the stages in the development of international relations (let's not forget that she specialized in world history) and the important events for France. The chapters of the book are devoted respectively to: 1. France's adaptation to the beginning of the Cold War, in which this country played a rather auxiliary role; 2. the attempts at independent French action in Europe during the rule of Gen. De Gaulle; 3. France's positions in the course of the preparation and implementation of the Pan-European process; 4. French policy in the 1980s, filled with profound changes in international relations and to which France had relatively difficult time adapting. The biggest challenge for Irina Grigorova was to critically analyze the French documents about what was happening in Bulgaria and other Eastern European countries, comparing and checking them with Eastern European documents and with the actual events that were unfolding – at times she managed to do it, but not everywhere. It seems to me that such a comparison is absolutely necessary, since French diplomats did not always have sufficiently reliable sources of information, and were often inclined to be misled by the theses of their Bulgarian informants (e.g. pp. 90-91, 95, 103-104).

The chronological approach is interrupted after the main chapters to make room for individual examples of Bulgarian-French cooperation in the field of: the production of Bulgar-Renault; the cooperation with the cosmetics company "L'Oreal"; with the French school of informatics.

Irina Grigorova is consistent in her desire to go beyond the chronological boundaries of the Cold War stated in the book's title. She not only began with the first steps of the French presence in the Balkans, but also ended the book with the French position after the end of the Cold War. Within the two final parts: Conclusion and Epilogue, she traced, albeit briefly, the new role of France in Bulgaria and Eastern Europe during the years of transition.

My positive assessment of the already published book does not mean that I do not have critical comments on the text. I will summarize them in the hope that the text will be improved in the future. The new course established during the time of Georgiy Malenkov and followed by Bulgaria and other countries is “food”, not “consumer” (p. 98) – the two words are close in sound, but have different meanings; the first name of the world-famous French director is Rene, not Рѳне Clair (p. 108); the British Foreign Secretary (and later Prime Minister) is Alexander Dalgas-Hume, not Хойм (p. 117); the radio stations “Voice of America” and “Free Europe” are

not banned, but silenced in Bulgaria (p. 145); there is no way that France is in third place as a supplier to Bulgaria after Germany and Italy, because the first places are occupied by the Soviet Union and other countries from the Eastern Bloc, probably the Western countries (p. 156), the wonderful example of Marie Vrina seems more like a positive example of overcoming division, rather than a danger (p. 182); between October 16 and November 3, 1989, a World Meeting on Environmental Protection was held in Sofia within the framework of the Pan-European Process, not the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, and on November 3, the mass procession of "Ekoglasnost" was held to submit to the National Assembly the petition against the "Rila - Places" project, not a demonstration of the Club for Support of Glasnost and Perestroika (p. 228); the funding of the British Council in Bulgaria in 2001 should have been presented not in francs, but in pounds sterling or in euros (p. 260).

I accept the self-assessment of Dr. Irina Grigorova about the scientific contributions of her book, since it includes unused archival sources – mostly French archival documents. At the same time, I find the statement that Bulgaria is becoming “an extremely significant asset in French foreign policy” a bit exaggerated, since this conclusion is contradicted at least by the data on foreign language learning in Bulgaria in 2022/23 – according to them, French is only in fifth place after English, Russian, German and Spanish (p. 261).

3. Research activities and publications

Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Irina Grigorova participated in the competition for the academic position of “associate professor” with a significant number of scientific research: – one monograph and 36 studies and articles in serious scientific journals and proceedings of scientific conferences. These publications show that the main theses of her habilitation work have found their way to the scientific community. They also show her activities with various other topics over the years. These are her works dedicated to industrial development in the Third Bulgarian Kingdom and in socialist Bulgaria; problems of international relations such as decolonization, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe or national security during the Cold War; French and Bulgarian cultural diplomacy; Chinese and Algerian issues; the development of sports in Bulgaria, etc.

The scientific output of Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Irina Grigorova is original and contains scientific contributions, which means that she meets the legal requirements for holding the academic position of "associate professor".

4. Evaluation of the contestant's other activities

Among the other scientific activities of Dr. Irina Grigorova, I would like to mention her organizational activities at the Institute for Historical Research and the section "Contemporary Bulgarian History" - she has participated in the work of the scientific council and in the preparation for accreditation of the institute, she is the secretary of the section. Irina Grigorova has been part of 10 scientific projects, eight of which are national and two international. She has also participated in 29 scientific conferences both in the country and abroad: France, Russia, Hungary, Romania. These activities show that Irina Grigorova has gained experience in research and in the organization of scientific activities.

Finally, I would like to share my personal impressions of Irina Grigorova's scientific qualities, which I have gained during our joint work on scientific projects and participation in scientific conferences. These impressions are that she is a serious researcher with broad horizons in the field of Bulgarian and general history.

5. Evaluation of the scientific indicators

According to the attached report on the scientometric indicators of Dr. Irina Grigorova according to the national requirements for the academic position of "associate professor" in Area 2. Humanities, Professional Direction 2.2. History and Archaeology, scientific specialty "History of Bulgaria", defined in the Regulations for the Implementation of the ZRASRB, she reports the following data: defended dissertation (group A - 50 points), published habilitation work with which she participated in the competition (Group B - 100 points), other publications (group D - 760 points), as well as citations (group E - 810 points). These data show that Irina Grigorova repeatedly exceeds the minimum scientometric requirements for holding the position of "associate professor".

6. Conclusion

The analysis of the habilitation work of Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Irina Grigorova, the review of her scientific publications, as well as my scientific contacts with her give me full reason to recommend that Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Irina Grigorova be elected to the academic position of "Associate Professor" in professional field 2.2. History and Archaeology, in the scientific specialty "History of Bulgaria" for the needs of the section "Contemporary Bulgarian History" at the Institute for Historical Studies of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

I will confidently vote for awarding the academic position of "associate professor" to Assistant Professor Dr. Irina Grigorova.

14 September 2026 г.

Assessor:

(Prof. Dr. Искра Баева)