

БЪЛГАРСКА АКАДЕМИЯ НА НАУКИТЕ ИНСТИТУТ ЗА ИСТОРИЧЕСКИ ИЗСЛЕДВАНИЯ	
Исходящ №	дата 201 г.
Входящ № 834	дата 23.09. 2016 г.
София 1113, бул. Шипченски проход № 52, бл. 17 тел.: 02/ 979 29 98 ; факс: 02/ 870 21 91	

REVIEW

Professor Dr. EVGENIA IVANOVA KALINOVA,
Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski",
Department of History of Bulgaria,

For the academic achievements of Assist. Prof. Dr.
IRINA GUEORGIEVA GRIGOROVA,
Participant in a competition for the academic position of Associate Professor
2. 2. History and Archaeology (Bulgarian History),
announced in State Gazette, No 46, 19 May 2026.

Information about the competition:

The competition for the academic position of 'associate professor' has been announced for the 'Contemporary Bulgarian History' section of the Institute of Historical Research at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. The provisions of the law regarding time limits and procedural requirements have been complied with. The only participant in the competition is Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Irina Grigorova.

Brief information about the candidate:

Irina Grigorova is a graduate of the 'Yoan Exarch' Language High School in Vratsa. In 2002, she graduated with a BA in History from the Faculty of History at Sofia University 'St. Kliment Ohridski'. In 2003, she obtained a Master's degree in Contemporary World History from the same faculty, and the following year she began her PhD in Contemporary Bulgarian History at the Institute of Historical Research at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. In December 2008, Irina Grigorova defended her doctoral thesis on 'Bulgarian–French Relations during the Presidency of General de Gaulle (1958–1969)' (published by Albatros in 2009). Her academic career has been at the Institute of Historical Research; she has held the post of Research Associate 2nd Level since 1 April 2009, and has been a Senior Academic Assistant from 1 October 2011 to the present.

Meeting the requirements for the academic position:

Senior Assist. Prof. Irina Grigorova has submitted a complete and accurately prepared portfolio of documents for participation in the competition. According to the information provided therein, Irina Grigorova meets all the mandatory requirements set out in Article 24 of the Law on Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria. She holds a doctoral degree, and her experience in the academic sphere exceeds 17 years (i.e. far more than the required two years, as evidenced by the attached certificate from the Institute of Historical Research at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences). The

enclosed information regarding fulfilment of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences' minimum requirements for the academic post of 'associate professor' shows that Irina Grigorova not only meets them but also exceeds them greatly (for instance, in Section D 'Publications', where 200 points are required, she has 760, and in Section E 'Citations', instead of the required 50, she has 810 points, although there are some inaccuracies).

Irina Grigorova is participating in the competition with an original monograph – 'Bulgaria in France's Foreign Policy during the Cold War'. (Sofia: 'Prof. M. Drinov' Academic Publishing House, 2026, 292 pp. ISBN 978-619-245-624-5). It corresponds to the subject and scope of the announced competition and does not duplicate the topic of her doctoral thesis.

In addition to the monograph, the candidate has 35 other articles and studies that are not included in the publications required for the award of the doctoral degree. Of these, five articles and five studies have been published in peer-reviewed and indexed journals ('Revue des études sud-est européennes'; 'Historical Review'; 'History'; 'Bulgarian Historical Review'); 19 articles and four studies appear in non-peer-reviewed journals with scientific peer review and edited collective volumes. It is important to note that Irina Grigorova's academic work focuses largely on issues in contemporary Bulgarian history, which is in line with the profile of the competition.

Opinion on the candidate's research activity:

Assist. Prof. Irina Grigorova presents a selection of her academic work relevant to the theme of the announced competition. The legal requirement for a published habilitation thesis, distinct from her doctoral thesis, has been met. This is 'Bulgaria in France's Foreign Policy during the Cold War' – a monograph of 292 pages in total, including an appendix, bibliography and summary in English. It is the result of the author's extensive research in the diplomatic archives of the Bulgarian and French Ministries of Foreign Affairs, as well as in the rich collections of the Central State Archives of the Republic of Bulgaria. A large number of archival documents are introduced into scholarly circulation for the first time, enabling a detailed reconstruction of French policy towards Eastern Europe and Bulgaria's place within it. Both in terms of its approach and its findings, this work makes a significant contribution to Bulgarian historiography and deserves high praise.

The archival documentary database is supplemented by important collections of published documents (e.g. 'Documents Diplomatiques Français. Paris: Ministère des Affaires étrangères. 2006') and a significant number of electronic resources (in Bulgarian and French), amongst which I would highlight the digitized issues of the newspaper *Le Monde*, described by Irina Grigorova as "the best-informed media in the country regarding French foreign policy". The author also refers to an impressive number of academic works in Bulgarian and a range of foreign languages, which are relevant to the subject of the study. Her endeavour to gather and review the widest possible range of publications – all of which are correctly cited in the monograph – makes an excellent impression.

The structure of the book follows a traditional approach, employing a problem-based, chronological framework, which I believe is the most appropriate for this type of research. The narrative is divided into an introduction, four chapters covering the respective periods of the Cold War – each containing thematically structured paragraphs – and ends with both a conclusion and an epilogue. It is striking that none of the chapter titles and most of the subtitles mention any years, presumably relying on the reader's historical knowledge. I think that the chapter titles themselves are rather wordy and, as a result, quite clumsy.

In the extensive introduction (pp. 9-42), the sole separate section, 'The Instrumentarium of French Foreign Policy' (pp. 11-39), occupies a central place, examining France's cultural and economic diplomacy. It is only after this section that the reader is introduced to the aims, objectives and, to some extent, the present state of French and Bulgarian historiography on the subject of the monograph (without it being clearly indicated who has researched Bulgaria's place in French policy, and to what extent), the general characteristics of the study's documentary basis, as well as the structure of the presentation. It seems to me that, to facilitate the reader's orientation in the book, it might have been better to begin with a 'classic' introduction, followed by a section presenting the 'tools' of French foreign policy. At the beginning of the introduction, the author tackles the major theme of the periodisation of the Cold War and the terminology used, which is done in a rather schematic manner and without going into depth on the historiographical debates. I believe that it was hardly necessary to address the issue in this way; the author needed only to specify the terms she considered appropriate for use in the book, and to justify the chronological parameters of the study, indicating whether these also corresponded to the time frame of the Cold War. On p. 11, it is stated that 'this text focuses on France's relations with Eastern Europe and the Balkans, particularly Bulgaria, during the Cold War'; and here the reasons for choosing these regions, and Bulgaria in particular, should have been highlighted. In fact, I believe that, given the book's title, Bulgaria should have been given priority.

In the Introduction section devoted to the historical background and approaches of French foreign policy in Eastern Europe, and specifically in Bulgaria, Irina Grigorova provides a detailed account of France's cultural diplomacy, particularly with regard to Bulgaria, from the National Revival period to the end of the Second World War. As far as I know, this is the first attempt of its kind to cover this extensive period, and I would regard this endeavour as successful - a substantial volume of information from Bulgarian and foreign studies has been synthesised, supplemented by archives researched by the author, and corrections have even been made to certain significant inaccuracies in previous publications (p. 30). Attention has been paid - albeit, logically, to a lesser extent - to economic diplomacy, of which the author has attempted to provide a definition; however, this particular issue still requires further examination.

The first chapter of the monograph aims to clarify the way in which French foreign policy adapted to post-war realities - at least, that is the title of the chapter, and it implies a general overview of France's post-war recovery and an analysis of its foreign policy as a whole. In fact, right from the first paragraph, the narrative focuses directly on the twists and turns surrounding the resumption

of diplomatic relations with Bulgaria, which are traced in detail through archival documents; unfortunately, however, without the necessary historical context in either Bulgaria or France, and without the author providing an in-depth explanation of Paris's interests in the Balkans immediately after the war. There is also a lack of certain essential details regarding the conduct of French diplomacy in the disputes surrounding the Bulgarian peace treaty at the Paris Peace Conference in the summer of 1946. The documentary book by Slavcho Vasev and Krum Hristov, **Bulgaria at the Paris Peace Conference 1946**, could have been referred to.

The second paragraph of the chapter provides an interesting account (I wish it were more detailed) of France's relations in the early post-war years with the various Balkan and some Eastern European countries, but the comparison with Bulgaria is somewhat superficial. Irina Grigorova notes that France was 'severely affected by the war, both economically and in terms of infrastructure' and sees this as the reason for the 'mobilisation of cultural diplomacy' (p. 55) through the resumption of the activities of French cultural institutions in the region. The focus is on the resumption of activities at French schools, cultural institutes and bilateral committees in Sofia and Paris, with new details provided that supplement the picture of bilateral cultural ties during the period 1944-1948 already outlined in Bulgarian historiography (V. Chichovska and others) of bilateral cultural relations during the period 1944-1948. The author draws attention to an important and hitherto overlooked aspect of French cultural diplomacy – 'the publication of a large number of informational materials containing embedded messages; in other words, the pursuit of an image-building policy which, in turn, will have an impact on cultural policy' (p. 60). The detailed account of the cultural events organised by the French side in Bulgaria is supplemented with new insights from French archival documents regarding the increasing ideologisation on the Bulgarian side of attitudes towards Western initiatives in late 1948 and early 1949, as well as the negative impact of France's financial difficulties on its ambitions for a cultural presence in the region. This latter theme is continued in the following paragraph, viewed through the prism of trade relations between Bulgaria and France, which were hampered by the post-war state of both countries' economies, as well as by Bulgaria's unsettled debts accumulated during the preceding period. The author should have clarified their origin and included G. Nikova's research on the subject, particularly as their repayment would prove a major obstacle to the normalisation of Bulgarian-French trade relations. Although the focus is on economic diplomacy, statistical data could also have been included on the share of trade with France in Bulgaria's total exports and imports, as well as on our country's position in France's trade exchanges.

In the next two paragraphs, Irina Grigorova focuses on Paris's behaviour amid growing Soviet-American tensions in the late 1940s. Using publications by prominent French historians as her basis, she presents her conclusion to the reader that France was seeking guarantees for its national security without succumbing to ideological influences: 'The United States are necessary in view of the Soviet threat, the USSR is necessary in view of the German danger, and the Federal Republic of Germany – as a partner in a Western European community to counterbalance the United States and the USSR' (p. 78). In this context, it is logically concluded that France's targeted actions in

Central and Eastern Europe did not wane even in the early 1950s, despite the region's increasingly visible Sovietisation. The author also presents an interesting comparison between the continuing French influence in Bulgaria through educational institutions and the severe restrictions imposed on such influence in a number of other countries in the early 1950s, thereby demonstrating the benefits of Bulgarian-French contacts within the context of Paris's overall policy towards the region. In this section, we also find an outline of aspects of the political situation in Bulgaria (following the death of G. Dimitrov in 1949) as seen through the lens of the newspaper **Le Monde**, but this logically raises the question of why this was not done for previous years as well, including, for example, coverage of the trial of Nikola Petkov, which was attended by French journalists.

In the first chapter, Irina Grigorova has chosen to include sections covering the period from 1950 to 1953, when, according to her, as a result of the Korean War, Paris 'toughened' its stance towards Eastern Europe. However, there is no explanation as to why, if this constitutes a new phase in French foreign policy, it has not been presented in a separate chapter. The same question is raised by the final paragraph of the first chapter, which, as the heading indicates, examines 'the new conditions of de-Stalinisation'. Both paragraphs contain interesting and important information on France's foreign policy and its actions towards Bulgaria; however, the 'linking' of the most acute phase of the Cold War and the imposing of Stalinism in Eastern Europe—followed by the slow process of de-Stalinisation—to the early post-war years, which had their own specific characteristics both in international relations and within the countries of the Soviet sphere, does not allow the differences in the French approach to the region to be sufficiently highlighted, nor the changes in the attitude of the Bulgarian leadership towards Western culture – and in particular French culture – from 1953 until the end of the decade (regarding the latter, there is also a detailed study – Kalinova, E. 'European Capitalist Countries in the Sphere of Bulgaria's International Cultural Activities in the Second Half of the 1950s'. – In: Yearbook of Sofia University 'St. Kliment Ohridski' – Faculty of History, vol. 81, 1988, 5–57; see also Kalinova, E. 'The Bulgarian Version of the Soviet "Thaw" in Culture, 1953–1963'. – In: Bulgaria and Russia in the 20th Century. Bulgarian–Russian Academic Discussions (Sofia, 2000, 418–424). During this period, attention could also have been paid to the Soviet-style censorship institution – Glavlit – and its role in restricting the exchange of books with Western countries might have been analysed, especially as there are some published studies on its activities.

The second chapter of the monograph analyses, as the title suggests, France's 'ambitious plans' under de Gaulle to 'maintain Western influence'. Logically, Irina Grigorova outlines the key aspects of the development of Paris's foreign policy strategy, but it would be helpful for the average reader if she were to include, even in footnotes, explanations of key events and documents which are merely mentioned and thus risk being misunderstood. The author outlines the approaches of French cultural diplomacy in the 1960s, comparing their application to Bulgaria with that to other Balkan and Eastern European countries. In the second paragraph, rather awkwardly titled 'Grading of mutual gestures and assessments of France and Bulgaria', Irina

Grigorova has chosen to highlight the way in which French archives and academic publications reveal how the Bulgarian state was perceived by French politicians, journalists and public figures. The author explains this largely positive perception primarily through the prism of the key characteristics of French 'Eastern policy', whilst the changes – both political and cultural – in Bulgaria, which in my opinion are of considerable significance to this attitude, are only briefly touched upon. The analysis would have gained in depth had it presented, alongside the French political concepts, the new developments in Bulgarian foreign policy towards Western Europe – and specifically towards France – during the 1960s. The same observation applies to the next paragraph, which examines Paris's efforts to revitalise economic diplomacy without outlining Bulgaria's economic problems and opportunities; the analysis of these would have allowed for an assessment of the appropriateness of the French approach adopted. Irina Grigorova's assertion that 'France's policy of industrial expansion managed to gain a foothold in the "people's democracies" and that they become reliable customers for its technologies' is not supported by specific data regarding Bulgaria, which makes it impossible to assess the effectiveness of French economic diplomacy.

The author has made every effort to research and present key information regarding Paris's endeavour, from the early 1960s, to expand, strategically plan and update its cultural diplomacy. The principles behind these efforts, which are also relevant to Bulgaria, are highlighted – the promotion of the French language, reaching out to the masses rather than just the elites, and so on. Attention is properly drawn to the regulation of cultural exchange through bilateral plans and agreements, but here too the process is presented one-sidedly – as an initiative by Paris, whilst Bulgaria's role in elevating cultural exchange with the West to the level of state-regulated cultural cooperation is overlooked, even though this topic is present in Bulgarian historiography (e.g. Kalinova, E. 'Bulgaria's "Authorised" Cultural Exchange with Western Europe from the Mid-1950s to the Mid-1960s'. – In: *Faces of the 'Times'* Vol. II, Sofia, 1997, 239–266). Significant details reveal the French interest in 'penetration' through radio broadcasts (primarily musical), the opening of French reading rooms, and so on. The author's aim is to trace how this 'penetration' took place in the various Eastern European countries, which is important for assessing the results achieved by French cultural diplomacy; however, it seems to me that Bulgaria has been given an unfairly small amount of attention – and this for a period when Bulgarian-French cultural exchange was perhaps most intense throughout the entire period from the end of the Second World War to 1989; moreover, Irina Grigorova herself has produced significant publications on the subject, to which she could have provided the necessary references. It is unlikely that the reader would find it uninteresting to know whether, and to what extent, France allowed Bulgarian cultural events to take place – this too is part of cultural diplomacy, insofar as, during the decade under consideration, reciprocity established itself as an important element of cultural cooperation.

The third chapter of the monograph, behind whose rather lengthy title ('Reaffirmation of French national interests in the context of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe and the ensuing US-Soviet tensions') covers the 1970s and the presidencies of Georges Pompidou (1969–

1974) and Valéry Giscard d'Estaing (1974–1981). The author outlines France's main foreign policy priorities and, within this context, its high-level contacts with Eastern European countries. However, those with Bulgaria are examined primarily through the lens of French archives and reports in "Le Monde", whilst information from Bulgarian archives is extremely scarce. A separate section presents the economic contacts that France maintained with Poland, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. The data presented, their comparison and the conclusions drawn are interesting, but here too one might raise the question of the specific nature of economic diplomacy and how it should be distinguished from the narrative of economic relations. In the third paragraph of the chapter, which, strangely enough, runs to one and a half pages, under the heading 'A New Factor in Bulgarian Domestic and Foreign Policy' Irina Grigorova presents the personality and politics of Lyudmila Zhivkova, without, however, including in the bibliography those studies in which considerably more pages are devoted to her (including her cultural policy abroad) (Milev, I. *The Life and Death of Lyudmila Zhivkova*. Sofia, 2018; Elenkov, Iv. *The Cultural Front*. Sofia, 2008; Petrov, Pl. *Art and Power in Bulgaria in the 1970s*. Sofia, 2021; Kalinova, E. *Bulgarian Culture and the Political Imperative 1944–1989*. Sofia, 'Paradigma', 2011; the articles by Gabriela Boneva and Vanya Mihaylova; the memoirs of Emil Alexandrov). L. Zhivkova's role in Bulgaria's 'cultural opening', including towards France, in the 1970s is indisputable, and it ought to be addressed not in this odd paragraph, but rather in the final paragraph of the chapter dealing with French cultural diplomacy during the period in question.

The following paragraph – 'In the Context of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe' – examines the cultural aspects associated with this important international event, which has not yet been sufficiently explored in Bulgarian historiography. To introduce the reader to the subject of this forum, Irina Grigorova should have provided general information about it right at the start (this is done to some extent, but only about ten pages later). However, she has chosen to present in detail France's efforts to ensure the distribution of its newspapers and books in some of the countries of Eastern Europe, and particularly in Bulgaria. This could be taken as evidence of the difficulties (both objective and subjective) facing cultural exchange between the countries on either side of the 'Iron Curtain', and one might see a link here with the following pages on France's conduct during the discussions on the so-called Third Basket during the CSCE.

I consider the studies presented by the author on France's cultural diplomacy in the 1970s in Eastern Europe and the Balkans to be a valuable contribution to Bulgarian historical scholarship – featuring the necessary comparative analysis, a selection of specific examples and well-considered conclusions, including regarding Bulgaria's position – a country characterised by the author as 'a unique, carefully maintained island of the French language and culture' (p. 193) and 'playing a key role in French foreign policy towards the East' (p. 194).

The fourth chapter of the monograph deals with the challenges faced by French foreign policy caused by the renewed intensification of the East-West confrontation in the 1980s. The book notes Paris's views on issues like the 'Bulgarian connection' in the assassination attempt on Pope John Paul II and the forced name changes of Bulgarian Turks, but these are examined solely through

the prism of President Mitterrand's planned and subsequently cancelled visit to Bulgaria. Unfortunately, the author merely mentions that contacts between the foreign ministries of the two countries between 1982 and 1989 were very intensive; she lists the meetings that took place but provides no information on the topics discussed or their outcomes (p. 201). A separate paragraph outlines an important shift in French economic diplomacy, which, according to I. Grigorova, Mitterrand 'took into his own hands'. Here, too, the author succeeds in depicting an interesting picture of this form of diplomacy, comparing its application to the various Eastern European and Balkan states. The section describing the organisational, personnel and financial problems encountered by French cultural diplomacy and their impact on relations with Bulgaria can be regarded as a significant contribution. Through an objective analysis of a sufficient volume of data and facts, Irina Grigorova proves her thesis regarding the 'collapse' of France's economic diplomacy in Eastern Europe and provides an adequate explanation of the reasons behind it. A separate paragraph outlines the activities of French politicians towards Bulgaria at the very end of the 1980s, which the author describes as 'Paris's dual approach – simultaneously maintaining good relations with the official authorities and close contacts with dissidents' (p. 228).

Under the heading 'Appendix – Examples of Industrial Cooperation between France and Bulgaria', following the main text of the monograph, the author has included three case studies – on the joint production of the 'Renault' car, on cooperation with the cosmetics giant 'L'Oréal', and on the challenges facing collaboration in the field of electronics. All three constitute serious research (Irina Grigorova had previously published versions of the first two in academic collections and journals), which provide important nuances to the picture of French economic policy towards Bulgaria, but as each covers a period of nearly two decades, the author perhaps failed to find a suitable place for them within the chronologically structured framework of the monograph.

Readers will be surprised by the extensive text added after the conclusion, entitled 'Epilogue', which in fact continues the examination of Bulgarian-French relations after 1989. The researched and summarised material outlines for the first time the key moments in these relations during the years of transition and may serve as a starting point for future research. The attached bibliography correctly lists the sources used in the monograph, but there are some inaccuracies in its presentation – for example, the section 'Academic Works' includes G. Dimitrov's "Diary" and books of memoirs (Kovachev, P. "Petar Mladenov. The Whole Truth"), reference (Mateeva, M. Bulgaria's Diplomatic Relations 1879–1974) and journalistic (N. Nedev's book on L. Zhivkova) in nature. The presentation would have benefited if the author had included in the footnotes more biographical details about the political and cultural figures referred to.

My overall impression of Irina Grigorova's monograph is positive; it has its merits and demonstrates the author's ability to gain insight into historical processes and analyze them within a broader regional and temporal context.

As part of her application for the academic position of "associate professor," Irina Grigorova has submitted over 30 articles and studies, which fall into several thematic categories. The first is

related to the topic of the habilitation thesis and includes 13 articles and studies. These publications trace the path of the scholarly research that ultimately led to the completion of the monograph as a whole. In this sense, they do not require separate evaluation, as they are incorporated to one degree or another into the book. Seven articles – two of which appeared in peer-reviewed and indexed journals – provide a historical overview of certain important economic entities from the period before and after World War II. Some of them are relevant to the topic of the habilitation thesis, while others are independent studies that demonstrate the candidate's sustained interest in the economic dimensions of contemporary Bulgarian history. Another thematic area is formed by a series of articles and studies by Irina Grigorova, which examine issues related to the preparation, conduct, and participation of Bulgaria and France in the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, as well as Bulgaria's initial contacts with the EEC. At times, the candidate's attention was also drawn to the plans and actions of Western countries and Bulgaria regarding Algeria in the 1960s, as well as to the policies of the Bulgarian authorities in the field of elite sports and the promotion of physical activity and sports. For the most part, these articles and studies introduce new archival materials—including those from foreign archives – into scholarly discourse and fill in some “gaps” in Bulgarian historiography. Therefore, I would assess the research papers submitted by Irina Grigorova for this competition as professional, objective, and addressing significant scholarly issues. This assessment is further supported by the fact that the candidate's publications have a substantial number of citations (81 in Bulgaria and abroad, according to the reference list attached to the documents), which attests to her strong academic recognition and the interest of numerous Bulgarian and foreign authors in her scholarly achievements.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that the set of professional skills and the substantial publications of Assist. Prof. Dr. Irina Grigorova give me reason to recommend to the esteemed academic jury that she be awarded the academic rank of “associate professor” in professional field 2. 2. History and Archaeology (Bulgarian History).

21 September 2026

(Prof. Dr. Evgenia Kalinova)