

REVIEW

by Prof. DCs Milko Stoyanov Palangurski – University of Veliko Tarnovo, professor of Modern History of Bulgaria, member of the scientific jury according to Order Z-RK-4/04.10.2024. of the Rector of New Bulgarian University on the announced competition for the academic position of associate professor in: Field of higher education 1. Humanities; Professional direction 2.2. History and archaeology, History of Bulgaria (History of Bulgaria) for the needs of the "New Bulgarian University", Faculty of Basic Education, History Department, announced in the State Gazette no. 69/16.08.2024. Admitted for participation in the competition is ch. assistant Dr. Aleka Alexandrova Strezova.

I. Data about the participant in the competition

Ch. assistant Dr. Al. Strezova has a master's degree in history from Kliment Ohridski University - 2006. Master's degree in international relations from the "Kliment Ohridski" - 2008. She has been a teacher and has worked as a translator from French and English at the Bulgarian News Agency (BNA). She studied as a full-time doctoral student in the "New Bulgarian History" section of the Institute for Historical Studies from 2008 to 2012 due to maternity leave. Ch. assistant Dr. Al. Strezova defended her doctorate in 2013 and in the same year was appointed to the assistant section, and in 2018 was elected as ch. assistant. From 2023 is an associate professor at the Institute for Historical Studies. The candidate meets all the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff and the requirements of the New Bulgarian University. The candidate has gained the educational degree "Doctor" - with the topic "Bulgarian diplomats (1879-1912)", reviewed according to the law and verified in the National Centre for information and documentation. The presented works - monographs and articles show that Ch. assistant Dr. Aleka Strezova meets and exceeds the minimum scientometric requirements of the law. In the competition, Dr. Strezova chose to apply with two monographic studies, 8 articles and 4 studies. All mentioned publications are in the field of the scientific specialty "History of Bulgaria".

II. Research (creative) activity and results

II.1. Evaluation of the monographic work, creative performances or other publications corresponding in volume and completeness to a monographic work, including an evaluation of the scientific and scientific-applied contributions of the author.

Ch. Assistant Professor Aleka Strezova, Ph.D., appeared in the competition with a habilitation thesis **Bulgarian Diplomacy. Institutions and representatives. 1879-1918**. S., "Avangard prima", 2017. ISBN 978-619-160-862-1 Scientific editor: Assoc. Dr. Rositsa Stoyanova; reviewer: Assoc. Dr. Vasilka Tankova.

The monograph is dedicated to the development of the country's diplomatic service under the first two rulers and represents an expanded version of texts used in the doctoral dissertation and brand-new research achievements. The first part of the monograph analyzes the legal acts that examine the diplomatic career and the structure of the Central Administration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and confessions, financing, the state and

the construction of the diplomatic network - from the Balkan countries, to the European capitals and finally to the USA.

All is explained, from the structural development and growth of the diplomatic representations, to the financing of the department, and with extra attention to the consular network of Bulgaria. Convincingly, with data, figures and tables, she shows that there is no high turnover in the ministry. Diplomatic missions abroad, in general, retain their official position, regardless of party reshuffles in the executive branch. All this with a clear differentiation of the political activity of long-term officials and especially on the part of the ministers who are iconic figures in Bulgarian history - G. Valkovich, D. Grekov, K. Stoilov, Gr. Nachovich, D. Stanchov

The exhibition re-presents the biographies of a number of forgotten diplomats - ministers and diplomats, some of them unknown outside of specialized scientific knowledge. The second part is entirely devoted to the biographical and career profiles of 76 Bulgarian diplomats, again based on a solid amount of historical, ethnographic, sociological and statistical sources. Practically for the first time, the professional files of the diplomats were used, and thus a comprehensive picture of the origin and family situation, of the language training, awards, social activity was outlined. As a result, we have not just biographies, but an experience of the socio-cultural profile of each diplomat. This makes it possible to delineate the formal and informal connections and opens up fields for future research and conclusions.

The participant in the competition also has a published monograph, which was not submitted for the main habilitation thesis - "The Last of His Kind. Dr. Georgi Valkovich (1833-1892)", 478 pages. Veliko Tarnovo, publishing house Faber, 2022. ISBN 978-619-00-1475-1. Scientific reviewers are Prof. Dr. R. Stoyanova and Prof. D.Sc. P. Stoyanovich.

The monograph is dedicated to the life and activities of one of the most significant builders of the new Bulgaria. It was written on the basis of a huge number of historical sources of various types and origin, which were collected from various archives, from the press, diaries and memoirs of contemporaries of the events, etc. It should be emphasized that a number of new and unknown sources have been brought into scientific circulation, thus enriching the historical process. The author shows a very good knowledge of historiographic achievements. It presents the life path and professional career path of Dr. Georgi Valkovich as a historical person with his own presence and leadership positions in the two worlds of Bulgarians - pre-liberation and post-liberation. Aleka Strezova's main goal is not only to reveal and analyze the "Valkovich" phenomenon, but to prove her thesis about the Doctor's significant contribution to the modernization of society both in the empire and in free Bulgaria with arguments and documents.

The author has succeeded in her goal. Quite logically, it traces the genealogical relationship of Georgi Valkovich, an offspring of the Koprivshtitsa Chorbazdhi family – Dzehelipi and Beglikchii of Chalakovtsi. Few have the opportunity to grow up in such a social environment, which on top of that is dominated by his kind. Valkovic focused on medical education, specialized in Paris, and then, quite naturally, began his career as a military doctor in the Ottoman Empire. The European air, but also his personal qualities make him a modernizer in spirit and, through Georgi S. Rakovski, logically bound to a liberating idea.

The pages dedicated to his life as the chief physician of the military hospital in Damascus are an undoubted scientific contribution and show how the new age penetrates into the dark forests of the empire, and how a man simultaneously finds a place among the governing elite and how this type of person approaches and identifies with the Bulgarian cause, then gradually leads their native community and at the same time make a protégé in diplomacy, also experiencing the mistrust of the empire.

From there on, his work on the construction of the Bulgarian state and the autonomous region began, showing us how a well-rounded statesman, politician and diplomat works. He is among the few who become ministers on both sides of the Balkans, participates in the drafting of the Tarnovo constitution, creates the administrative systems of a Rumelia directorate and two princely ministries based on an European model. And before and during Unification, he found himself in his favorite role as a military medic, as chief physician of the Army's Eastern Squad, helping shape the parameters of the state's modern military health service.

The Bulgarian crisis united the national forces and the conservative Dr. G. Valkovic undertook a diplomatic mission in Constantinople for a period of 6 years in a liberal ministry. The monograph describes the actions of the "eyes and ears" of the Sofia government in the Ottoman capital and the saving of national sovereignty, strengthening of the Exarchate, the idea of the railway route to Macedonia and the beginning of the construction of the church of "St. Stefan". His sufficiently flamboyant behavior and leading role is enough to justify his political assassination by a great power.

Aleka Strezova's work on the reconstruction of the life and activities of Dr. G. Valkovich is essentially a combination of personal biography and history of the Bulgarian diplomatic department. This approach, as well as the professional scientific and critical handling of historical sources, have provided the author with the opportunity to focus on the process of modernization of the Ottoman Empire, the Principality and Eastern Rumelia, which should be recognized as the main contribution of the research.

Ch. assistant Dr. Al. Strezova has publications in all indicators from 6 to 9 in group D of the minimum scientific requirements: Scientifically, they cover several areas:

There are two studies on MFA, in a field that is essential for the candidate. They show the consular network, the legislative framework, budget expenditures, the recruitment of diplomatic personnel and the state, etc. An independent emphasis is the study of the creation, development and condition of the network of commercial agencies in the Ottoman Empire and their role in the functioning of the Bulgarian ethnic element in the empire, between the Exarchate and the IMRO.

A main emphasis in the candidate's activities is the prosopographical profile of diplomats as a social group. Separate studies are devoted to the diplomats born and raised in Bessarabia and Constantinople, showing their formation as heirs of Bulgarian emigrants, their origin from families of community leaders, receiving an education that was enviable for its time and, in general, the uniform matrix of shaping the personal appearance. Separate biographical essays are devoted to two diplomats - Haralambi Sarmadzhiev and Stoyan Petrov-Chomakov, in which unknown details of their diplomatic activities are given. The author is also interested in other activities outside the professional ones of the persons she

studies - as evidenced by the study of the diplomat Petar Mateev's philanthropic activities. The candidate's research also extends into the field of genealogy with the attached study of the Hadzhimishev's family in Thessaloniki. In the field of memoirs and source studies, Al. Strezova has several publications.

The diversity and versatility of the studies on Bulgarian history of Al. Strezova can also be seen in her publications of sources from the Istanbul Ottoman Archives. They contain new and unknown data about the revolutionary movement and V. Levski, which quickly find scientific recognition and enter into historiographical circulation. The candidate also touches on topics of history, memory and the traumatic past, with her research on the memory of the First World War in Bulgaria. It is a look at a variety of material related to the topic and aims to present the prevailing mood and perception of this important event. In addition to the traditional historical view of the war, topics such as social trauma, women's history, sanitary care, etc. also appear.

II.2. Citation by other authors.

Ch. assistant Dr. Al. Strezova is a recognizable author and her scholarly works are cited by the historical collegium. The citations presented fully meet the requirements of the law.

II.3. Assessment of the results of participation in research and creative projects and application of the results in practice.

Ch. assistant Dr. Al. Strezova is an active participant in national and university research programs. From the reference presented in the documents, it is clear that both the legal and the specific requirements of the NBU have been met.

Ch. assistant Dr. Aleka Strezova is already an accomplished scientist who has her own place in the historiographical process: with a very clear and precisely defined field of scientific research - Bulgarian history. Her scientific concentration is on the development of the diplomatic history of the country, the Bulgarian political, economic and social elite, the Renaissance history, the emancipation of women, the documentary heritage, etc.

The analyzes and the source material brought into scientific circulation have been personally processed and interpreted. Those presented by her have their place and life in the scientific space and are very quickly reflected in the historiographical process. After the defense of the educational and scientific doctor degree, she has a noticeable growth in scientific terms. I must emphasize that the presented habilitation thesis and a huge number of the articles and studies are entirely dedicated to the subject of the competition and cover the field of History of Bulgaria. Their versatility as fields of research shows that the candidate's competencies are sufficient to become an authoritative researcher of the country's recent past.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that the research presented and the research work carried out give me reason to state that the participant in the competition is a researcher who meets the requirements for holding the academic position "associate professor". Considering the quality of the habilitation work, the research profile and the topic of the competition - "History of Bulgaria", I propose ch. Assistant Professor Aleka Strezova, Ph.D., to be proposed to the Academic Council of the New Bulgarian University for the selection of the academic position "associate professor".

06/11/24

Prof. DCs Milko Stoyanov Palangurski