

OPINION

of Prof. Momchil Nikolaev Metodiev, D. Sc., New Bulgarian University,
professional field 2.2. History and Archaeology,
on the scientific works for participation in the competition for the academic position of Associate
Professor in the field of higher education 2. Humanities,
professional field 2.2 History and Archaeology (History of Bulgaria),
announced in the State Gazette, no. 69/16.08.2024,
with candidate Senior Assistant Professor Aleka Strezova, PhD

ASSESSMENT OF COMPLIANCE WITH THE MINIMAL NATIONAL REQUIREMENTS AND THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE NEW BULGARIAN UNIVERSITY

The submitted documents certify that the candidate for the competition Dr. Aleka Strezova meets and exceeds the minimum national requirements set by the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria for candidates for the academic position “Associate Professor”.

RESEARCH ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS

The focus of Dr. Aleka Strezova’s research is the history of the emergence of the modern Bulgarian state and, in particular, the establishment of the modern Bulgarian diplomatic service. Her research, which is based on both Bulgarian and foreign archives, is presented in numerous academic monographs, studies and articles published in various journals, and is summarized in two monographic works, one of which is submitted as the main habilitation thesis for this competition. This is the monograph “Bulgarian Diplomacy. Institutions and Representatives (1879-1918)”, Sofia, 2017, in which the author presents the construction and maturation of the modern Bulgarian diplomatic service. The monograph successfully defends the stated aim of presenting “the structuring of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Religious Denominations and its subordinate offices”. As the author points out, until this publication there had been no such critical academic study, apart from the official anniversary publications and reference books, published by the Ministry itself.

The study consists of two parts, the first of which is devoted to the structure of the institution itself and its foreign consulates and offices, while the second presents the basic biographical data of the

first two generations of Bulgarian diplomats. The advantage of the present study is its very clear structure, as well as the analysis and summary of the data gathered in the course of the research. Although at first glance it may seem short, the first part summarizes a large amount of information, a significant part of which is presented in the form of tables, while also presenting the place of the diplomatic service in the context of the construction of the modern state.

The second part, devoted to the biographies of the representatives of the first two generations of diplomats, is written with a critical and detached approach. These essays do not overlook the dark spots in the biographies of some of them, without, however, seeking sensationalism. Presented as a point of reference, these biographical essays are characterized by research honesty and a critical attitude towards the sources. It should be noted that at the end of each portrait there is also a brief reference to the archival sources on which it is based, which is also a significant advantage for future researchers.

In conclusion, the present monograph constitutes an indispensable basis and starting point for future research, both for the author herself and for other historians. The proof that this goal has been successfully achieved is the large number of citations of this monograph.

The monograph is also the basis on which Dr. Aleka Strezova herself developed her later research. This is also evident in the second monograph submitted outside the current competition, “Last of its Kind. Dr. Georgi Valkovic (1833-1892)”, Sofia, 2022, in which the author examines in detail the biography of one of the most prominent representatives of Bulgarian diplomacy. In this monograph, the author demonstrates her interest and understanding not only of the biographical trajectory, but also of the environment that enabled the development of Dr. Georgi Valkovic. A particular focus is placed on the possibility of upward social mobility afforded to the holder of a medical profession in a modernizing country.

In addition to these two monographs, Dr. Aleka Strezova has co-authored two other collective monographs, and she has compiled and served on the editorial board of several volumes of documentary collections. In addition, she submitted a total of 9 articles to the competition, one of which was published in the journal *Etudes Balkaniques*, which is indexed in world-renowned databases. The submitted articles deal with various aspects of diplomatic history, while some of them are based on the research in the foreign archives. The articles cover a wide range of topics, including publications in both English and French. Particularly important are the articles “Japan

through the eyes of a diplomat: Stoyan Petrov-Chomakov”, presented in the collective volume *Japan and the European Southeast* and also the article “Diplomatic sources for the early history of the Bulgarian central revolutionary committee and Levski, contained in the diplomatic archive in Istanbul”, published in the *Historical Review*.

In addition, Dr. Aleka Strezova has participated in several international research and educational projects, she is also a member of the Bulgarian Studies Association in the USA, and has participated in a number of national and international conferences over the years.

On the basis of these publications, it could be concluded that Dr. Aleka Strezova is an established, conscientious and respected researcher. This is also facilitated by her education in history and international relations as well as her knowledge of foreign languages, specifically English, French and Russian. Her growth as a historian can be seen in the works and articles presented, as they show how a very deep knowledge of one particular institution (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Religious Denominations) helps to broaden her focus and interests to other areas of research.

TEACHING ACTIVITIES

Dr. Aleka Strezova is a lecturer in the History and Archaeology Program at the New Bulgarian University, she is teaching 8 specialized and general education courses at the University, some of them in English.

PERSONAL IMPRESSIONS OF THE CANDIDATE

I know the candidate Dr. Aleka Strezova from her work as a visiting lecturer at the New Bulgarian University and I can express my very positive impression of her as a loyal colleague, conscientious researcher, and dedicated lecturer who works responsibly with students and manages to maintain a good working and academic atmosphere.

I can only hope that in the future she will continue to develop her research and teaching career in such an active way, and my recommendation to her is that she should give herself more freedom in the subjects she researches, since in my opinion she is one of the historians who knows the period of the construction and building of the modern Bulgarian state very well.

All this gives me reason to express with full conviction my positive opinion about the candidacy of Dr Aleka Strezova for the academic position of Associate Professor in the field 2.2 History and

Archaeology (History of Bulgaria) at the New Bulgarian University and to recommend her candidacy for approval by the Academic Council of the NBU.

Sofia, 03.12.2024

Signature:

Prof. Momchil Metodiev, D. Sc