

OPINION

BY ROSITSA IVANOVA STOYANOVA PhD, PROFESSOR IN NEW BULGARIAN HISTORY IN THE INSTITUTE FOR HISTORICAL STUDIES, BULGARIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES, NOMINATED FOR MEMBER OF SCIENTIFIC JURY WITH ORDER Z-RK-4/04.10.2024 BY THE RECTOR OF NEW BULGARIAN UNIVERSITY FOR THE COMPETITION OF HOLDING THE ACADEMIC POSITION “ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR”, ANNOUNCED IN STATE GAZETTE EDITION 69/16.08.2024, WITH ONE APPLICANT THAT IS ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR PHD ALEKA ALEKSANDROVA STREZOVA

I. Evaluation on the conformity with the minimum national requirements and the requirements of New Bulgarian University:

As of the date of filing the documents and depositing the present opinion, PhD Strezova has been holding the academic position “Associate professor” in the Institute for historical studies. She has attained educational and scientific degree “PhD” with PhD thesis of the topic “Bulgarian diplomats in 1879-1912”, defended on the 28th of May 2013. She has decided to apply in the competition with two monographic research works, 12 studies and articles, published in referenced and non-referenced scientific periodicals and collections. All the defined publications are within the domain of the scientific major “History of Bulgaria”, and the quantitative dimensions they contribute with for the applicant cover and exceed the requirements regulated in the Academicians’ Development of the Republic of Bulgaria Act. The same is in effect when it comes to the data for references.

II. Research work and results:

In the capacity of main dissertation, PhD Strezova presented the monography “*Bulgarian diplomacy: institutions and representatives 1879-1918*”. Sofia, 2017. Its contributing nature is guaranteed by the selected approach towards the topic – without isolating the issues of foreign policy, the author focuses her analysis on the institutional construction of Bulgarian diplomacy and its personal representatives. The implementation of this approach relies on a broad massif of documents and provides the opportunity to unveil the specific model of elaboration of government structure of contemporary type and model collective biography of the Bulgarians that inhabited the international diplomatic stage from 1879 to 1918. The first part of the monography is focused

on the formation of the administrative appearance and structure of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Religions (MFAR) and the diplomatic network abroad. In it she has traced the gradual development of the ministry, the growth of human resources, opening diplomatic representative offices abroad, ministerial funding. The author pays special attention to the fruitful efforts made for its modernization by several ministers and long-term employees such as G. Valkovich, D. Grekov, K. Stoilov, Gr. Nachovich, D. Stanchov, Georgi Vernatsa. In Strezova's opinion, in the eve of the Great War, the MFAR already had a "completed internal structure and established external political network". In convincing manner, while using data, numbers and tables she proves that there was no great turnover in the ministry, the senior officials in the head office, as well as in the diplomatic representations abroad, generally speaking maintained their official position, irrespective of the party changes in the executive power, party nominations were not such a frequent practice. Strezova also pays attention to monarch's role in recruiting diplomatic personnel.

In the second part, entitled "Bulgarian diplomats. Biographies" she has presented 76 representatives of the Bulgarian diplomacy arranged alphabetically, according to their family name. All the ministers of foreign affairs and foreign representatives have been covered. The only exception of the generally accepted principle is the inclusion of an article devoted to Georgi Vernatsa, whereas the author arguments her decision with the role of this personality in the process of developing the Bulgarian diplomatic service. The prosopographic reading of the personal stories of 76 Bulgarian diplomats is based on solid quantity of historical, sociological, statistical, ethnographic and other data sought in all kinds of sources. I would like to especially mention the circumstance that namely Strezova uses for the first time in practice systematically manner the professional dossiers of the employees of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs preserved in file 176K B Archives State Agency. In addition to the remarkable biographic data – education, career growth, professional realization, the articles contain in purposeful manner information about the origin and family status, language preparation, awards, public activity of the people that or short or longer term found realization in the diplomatic domain. As a result, in the second part of the book we have not only biographies, but an attempt for social and cultural profiling of each and every diplomat. This provides us with the opportunity to outline the formal and informal relations in Bulgarian diplomacy and discovers fields for future researches and conclusions.

In the competitive documentation, the applicant is presented with second monography, devoted to PhD Georgi Valkovich. On the grounds of exceptionally abundant source material – versatile documents maintained in archive repositories, published documents, memoir essays and diaries, data from the press etc., the author reconstructs in detail the life pathway of this public figure. The contributions are from purely eventful point of view, as well as in the analysis in terms of nature, perception of the world and performances of Valkovich at the public stage. In this pattern of its, the research work is an achievement in the Bulgarian historiography and documents Strezova's growth as researcher who demonstrates in-depth knowledge of time, events and processes, of the historical personalities and public circles, the relations between them and has cultivated the skills to handle sources of various nature and origin, has acquired knowledge about broad range of regional issues.

The 12 publications that have been selected for participation in the competition complement applicant's profile as a researcher of the Bulgarian diplomacy. Meanwhile, they and the attached detailed list of publications attest her as a scientist with broad and multifaceted interests in various domains, with certain preferences for kinship research work, tracking and issuing documents etc. I would like to underline that the curriculum vitae of Petar Mateev which has been published and commented by Strezova and accompanied by detailed study about him, plunged the activity and personality of this interesting public figure out of the darkness. The applicant has rich experience in editor and compiling operations, in the participation in scientific projects – national and international.

To summarize, PhD Aleka Strezova is an accomplished researcher, with versatile interests and methodological preparation at high level. She consistently demonstrates professionalism in working with the sources, respect and consideration the work of scientists who worked before her, makes purposeful efforts to improve her qualification and discover new pieces of information about Bulgarian history.

V. Personal impressions of the candidate:

My personal impressions of the candidate are positive in general – she is competent as a professional; she possesses the dose of curiosity that is mandatory to the historian for the new and unchartered one; she treats with respect and with scepticism the theses stated before her; she is communicative; accurate and responsive in her relationships with her colleagues that makes her a preferred member of the R&D teams.

VI. Opinions, recommendations and notes on candidate's activity and achievements:

In conclusion, I would like to underline that the publications and other materials presented for participation in the competition give me the grounds to conclude with confidence that the participant in the competition satisfies the requirements for holding the academic position "associate professor". In the presented works I found no plagiarism and false data. Based on the abovementioned, I propose to the Academic Board of New Bulgarian University PhD Aleka Strezova to be elected at the academic position "associate professor", professional direction 2.2. History and archaeology (History of Bulgaria) for the needs of the Faculty of Basic Education, department "History", New Bulgarian University.