

POSITION

by Prof. Veselin Kostov Yanchev, DSc., Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

1. Humanities; Professional field 2.2. **History and Archaeology**; Scientific specialty **History of Bulgaria** (Modern Bulgarian History)

for the scientific works submitted under the competition for the academic position "Associate Professor", in Professional field: 2.2. **History and Archaeology, History of Bulgaria**, for the needs of the **New Bulgarian University**, School of General Studies, History Department, announced in the "State Gazette" № 69 of 16th August 2024, with candidate Chief Assist. Prof. PhD Aleka Alexandrova Strezova

I. Assessment of compliance with the minimum national requirements and the requirements of the New Bulgarian University

The candidate for the academic position of associate professor – chief assist. PhD. Aleka Strezova is a graduate of the Faculty of History of Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski", who continued her professional development at the Institute for Historical Studies of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and the New Bulgarian University. Building on her excellent language proficiency and her second higher education degree in "International Relations", she focuses her scientific interests mainly on the foreign policy and diplomacy of the Principality and Kingdom of Bulgaria, but also on a number of topics related to the Bulgarian Renaissance and the modern Bulgarian and European history. Since 2023, she has been an associate professor at the Institute for Historical Studies of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

Aleka Strezova participated in the competition with two monographs, four studies and eight articles. The presented scientific production not only meets, but significantly exceeds the minimum requirements for scientific and teaching activities for the field of higher education Humanities, Professional field: 2.2. History and archaeology, determined by the existing normative basis in Bulgaria – the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations on the Development of the Academic Staff of NBU and Appendix 2. Minimum national requirements and requirements of NBU for candidates for acquiring a scientific degree and for occupying the academic positions of "chief assistant", "associate professor" and "professor".

For example, under the group of indicators D (published monograph that is not presented

as a main habilitation work; articles, studies and reports published in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific information and in non-refereed journals with scientific review or published in edited collective volumes), she has 330 points out of the required 200 points. Under the group of indicators E (citations), the points are 105 out of the required 50, and under indicators F (administration or participation in national and international scientific or educational projects) – 115 out of the required 0 points. It should be noted that some of her publications are in foreign languages, which makes her recognizable, read and cited not only in Bulgaria.

II. Research (creative) activity and results

As the main habilitation work, A. Strezova presents the monograph “Bulgarian Diplomacy. Institutions and Representatives. 1879 – 1918”. Sofia: Avangard Prima, 2017, 240 p. ISBN 978-619-160-862-1. The monograph complements and builds on her PhD work on the topic “Bulgarian Diplomats. 1879 – 1912”. The research fills a significant deficit in the institutional memory of our society, describing a significant period of the establishment and functioning of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Denominations. Based on authentic archival material, with the skillfulness of a good researcher, the organizational and structural evolution of the diplomatic department, its regulatory framework and financing have been reconstructed. The establishing of the diplomatic network and its gradual expansion are also presented while indicating the contributions of the heads of state, ministers and officials for the modernization of the ministry. The text is illustrated with numerous tables, diagrams and photographs. As the second part of the study, the biographies of 76 foreign ministers and diplomats are presented, many of them little known or even unknown to the general public. With enviable persistence, a huge and of varied sources material was searched for and studied, which contributes significantly not only to presenting the professional career but also the early years, education and public activities of the diplomats.

The destiny of the Bulgarian diplomacy and its representatives are subject of studies and articles by Dr. Al. Strezova in the following years. They expand the chronological scope of the topic, add new touches to the portraits of Bulgarian diplomats, reveal the positions of foreign diplomatic representatives. The establishment and development of the Bulgarian trade agencies in the Ottoman Empire has been also studied.

Apart from this topic, Strezova searched for and published documents stored in the Istanbul Ottoman Archives about the revolutionary activities of the Bulgarians in the years 60-s and 70-s of 19th century as well as about V. Levski. She participated in the preparation and publication of several documentary and encyclopedic collections. Strezova has a main role in the reviving of remarkable personalities of the modern Bulgarian history such as P. Mateev and N. Stoyanov through the publication of their memoirs and diaries.

The new monograph by Dr. Strezova, published in 2022, "The Last of His Kind. Dr. Georgi Valkovich (1833-1892)". Veliko Tarnovo: Faber, 480 pp. ISBN 978-619-00-1475-1, demonstrates the professional maturity and solid scientific skills of the author. They logically fit in and are a consequence of her striving to methodically portray the personalities that form the foundations of the modern Bulgarian statehood. The goal set in the introduction – to present the life and professional biography of Dr. G. Valkovich, has been fulfilled in a remarkable way, bringing not only knowledge, but also an aesthetic pleasure. This has been done by overcoming numerous difficulties arising from the subject of her research – a cosmopolitan personality, a product of two eras, who shot to the highest professional and administrative echelon of the Ottoman Empire, Eastern Rumelia and the Principality of Bulgaria. The result achieved would have been impossible without the scrupulous attitude to the documentary heritage, vast and scattered, left by or about Dr. Valkovich, without the detailed knowledge of the Bulgarian and foreign historiography that is used in an extremely correct way. The work also impresses with the accurate recreation of the atmosphere and environment in which Dr. Valkovich was born, brought up, educated and realized as a doctor, politician and diplomat. The harmonious and balanced presentation of the many circumstances, dynamics, personalities related to Dr. Valkovich enables the author to describe convincingly this complex personality. This in turn allows the author to reveal new and unknown pages from the past of the Bulgarian community in the Ottoman Empire, from the political and social life of Eastern Rumelia and the Principality of Bulgaria, to detail and specify otherwise known problems of our post-liberation history and foreign policy. In parallel with tracing the socio-political activities of her hero, Al. Strezova manages to build his vivid character, revealing the intimate aspects of his character and his family relationships.

As mentioned above, A. Strezova administered one and participated in two international and three national scientific projects. In the period 2017-2024 alone, she took part in five national and four international scientific conferences.

III. Educational and teaching activities

Since 2023, Dr. Aleka Strezova has been a part-time lecturer at the New Bulgarian University, with lecture courses dedicated to problems of the diplomatic history of Bulgaria, of the Balkan countries and Europe, geopolitics and civic knowledge and skills.

The overall scientific and teaching activities of Dr. Aleka Strezova testify to her rich general historical expertise and competence, to a precise and analytical approach to documents and facts from the past, to the methodical depth of her conclusions and assessments and ability to present them to an audience.

Taking into account all of the above, I will vote with conviction for Dr. Strezova to be elected to the academic position of "associate professor" in professional field 2.2. History and Archaeology, History of Bulgaria, for the needs of the New Bulgarian University, School of General Studies, History Department.

Sofia, 26 November 2024

Professor DSc. Veselin Yanchev