

# REVIEW

by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mihail Ivanov Gruev - SU "St. Kliment Ohridski"/ State Agency "Archives", habilitated in Professional direction 2.2. - History and Archeology (History of Bulgaria) for participation in a competition for the academic position of "Professor" at SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" by professional direction 3.1. – Sociology, anthropology and cultural sciences (Sociology – Historical sociology)

## **1. Legality of the procedure**

By order of the rector of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" No. RD 38-302/10.06.2024, I have been appointed as an internal member of a scientific jury for the holding of a competition for the occupation of the academic position of "professor" at SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" by professional direction 3.1. – Sociology, anthropology and cultural sciences (Sociology – Historical sociology). The competition was announced in the State Gazette, no. 32/04/2024. The only participant in it is Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hab. Martin Ivanov Ivanov - lecturer in the Department of Sociology at the Faculty of Philosophy of Sofia University. By decision of the scientific jury, taken at its meeting on 20.06.2024, I have been designated as a reviewer. My review of the procedure for admission to participation in the competition and formation of the scientific jury did not find any deviation from the provisions of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB), the Rules for its Implementation, as well as from the Rules for the Terms and Conditions for acquisition of scientific degrees and occupation of academic positions at the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". According to the documents provided, the candidate meets both the minimum national requirements laid down in the LDASRB and the additional requirements of Sofia University, which is why I believe that the procedure is completely legal.

## **2. Research work and contributions of the candidat**

Since the earlier researches of Martin Ivanov, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hab., have already been subject to evaluation and scientific criticism in the course of his academic growth , only his publications after 2008, when he held the academic position Associate Professor at the Institute for Historical Studies of the BAS, will be analyzed and commented here. An exception to this principle is his monograph "The Bulgarian Foreign Debt 1944 - 1989. The Bankruptcy of the Communist Economy", co-authored with Daniel Vachkov, published in 2007, as it was not presented as a habilitation thesis. However, I feel obliged to point out that his book "Reformation without Reforms: Political Economy of Bulgarian Communism, 1963-1989", published by the Institute for the Study of the Recent Past and "Ciela" Publishing House in 2007 and until today it remains the most serious contribution to the study of the attempted economic reforms that the communist regime undertook in its efforts to raise consumption

and living standards. In fact, this topic continues to excite the author even later. Part of the publications with which he participated in the competition for the academic position of "professor" are also dedicated to her. In particular, I would note here his study in Sociological Problems on "Socialist Prosperity and the Consensus of Hypocrisy", which sets out the basic principles of deficit economics, to use Kornai's term, as well as his article in the Bulletin of the Center for Economic -historical studies, co-authored with M. Morris, on the standard of living measured by the consumption of different types of food.

The second major thematic circle that can be distinguished in Ivanov's work is around the problems of the Bulgarian foreign debt from the Liberation to the end of the communist rule. These are issues the candidate has been working on for decades. The monograph already cited above, co-authored with D. Vachkov, essentially represents part of a larger project on Bulgaria's external public debt, on which the two authors worked together with the late Tsvetana Todorova. More specifically, the candidate is the author of the last two chapters of the study, in which, for the first time in Bulgarian historiography, based on rich documentary material, he examines the history of the three debt crises in the late decades of the existence of the communist regime. At the same time, he points out the reasons for their occurrence, as well as the efforts of the rulers to deal with them, using various instruments - through the sale of the gold reserve, clearing agreements and reaching the unilaterally announced moratorium on payments in 1990. This topic was subsequently researched by a number of other authors, has also become the object of numerous journalistic speculations.

The third problematic circle in Ivanov's work could generally be described with the term "Bulgarian modernization". The author's publications are numerous on various aspects and details of this process, which covered both the city and the village at the end of the 19th and in the 20th century. He devoted a separate monograph to a more private aspect of this big problem, namely the role of the textile industry as a factor modernizing society in the long XIX century, which, however, is not the subject of the present review. Among the texts proposed for participation in the competition, his studies on the state of the Bulgarian village before Bulgaria's entry into the Second World War, on the phenomenon of Gabrovo manufacturers, on the economic rise in the country after the end of the Great Depression, etc. could be attributed to this thematic circle.

Undoubtedly, a central place in Martin Ivanov's work is occupied by the problem of the formation, evolution and difficult fate of the Bulgarian post-liberation elites during the years of the communist regime. Here it is necessary to dwell in more detail on the author's habilitation thesis submitted for review, entitled: "Former people" of concentration camp Bulgaria", published by Ciela publishing house this year. And because the term with which Martin Ivanov titled his book is too conditional and fluid, quite logically, in the introductory part of his research, the author devoted a considerable amount of space to its definition, with all the permeability of the boundaries and social categories included in it. The nature of this research is interdisciplinary – situated between biography, historical sociology and the social history of Bulgarian communism, it could also be read as a purely artistic account of a harsh time. This, in itself, predetermines the diversity of the methodological tools used by him, including text-critical and semantic analysis of sources of different origin and nature,

qualitative and quantitative sociological methods, etc. Although the research is without analogue up to this point in native historiography and sociography, Ivanov nevertheless tried to compare the Bulgarian case with other contemporary Russian and English-language publications, devoted mostly to the fate of the old Russian aristocracy after the October Revolution. Although he derives some common dependencies, he still comes to the conclusion that the differences in the approach of the two regimes in the processes of adaptation and reconversion of this social category are much more than the similarities. Here, of course, the author also reviews the studies available in Bulgarian up to that point, which are related to the researched problem, and especially the book by Vili Lilkov and Hristo Hristov, which partially repeats the title of his study. Again in the introductory part, reflecting on the methodology of his research, Martin Ivanov poses a basic and fundamental question to which he seeks an answer throughout the presentation, namely - can the history of society and of these hundreds of thousands of individual destinies be reconstructed through the documents of State security, and in general about the way in which this documentation should be read and interpreted. Indeed, it is a common problem, or rather a challenge, faced by every researcher of the totalitarian era. Because to completely ignore the information contained in the tens of linear kilometers is not possible, but at the same time, accepting and interpreting it uncritically would be completely naive. Moreover, without the necessary contextualization and verification, such an approach would immanently reproduce the desire to dehumanize the victims, demonize them, and erase them from history contained in this type of documentation. To deal with this contradiction, the author has also given the floor to the victims, or at least to their voices that have reached us, embodied in memoirs, diaries and interviews. The volume of testimonies attracted by Ivanov is impressive. The book uses and integrates to varying degrees 309 published diaries, diary notes and memories, the discovery of some of which, without data on the publisher, without even the place and year of publication, represents a real bibliographic feat. In practice, we are talking about almost all the memoir literature created by the victims of the communist regime. In addition, it includes 95 autobiographical stories, some of which were recorded by him personally, 62 video interviews from the "Jeans" program on BNT, referring to the problem and making up a total of 32 hours of recordings. A detailed list of all these sources, categorized by genre, is attached at the end of the work, as well as an impressive scholarly bibliography, including 229 titles.

Structurally, the work consists of two unequal chapters, dedicated respectively to the fate of the first and second generations of "former people" immediately after the establishment of the communist regime in Bulgaria and during the first two decades of its existence, as well as to the different types of life strategies for survival and adaptation. Here Ivanov offers a general typology of the types of repression in relation to "former people" and guides us through each one of them. It begins with the physical destruction of the Bulgarian elite in the first months after 09/09/1944 and goes through the various forms of expropriation, as well as through the main types of discrimination - internment, internment, inability to get a job, educate their children, etc. etc.

Although the first wave of terror, which included the extrajudicial killings of thousands of people, the exact number of which sciences continues to debate, is relatively well studied, Ivanov adds new touches to it. He changes the source of this narrative, giving the floor to the

families of the victims. It is clear from their testimonies that these are people with very different destinies and biographies, and their falling into the category of "enemy of the people" is too individual. Very often the reasons for this are rather personal and even domestic, and the stirring of the layers brings to the surface shadows of the past, which in the new situation become a legitimate reason for murders, extortions and robberies. The author very precisely manages to capture the difference between the symbolically murdered (some subsequently convicted) representatives of the political elite and the trivialization of the violence that involved hundreds of thousands of people. At the same time, he also gives dozens of examples of the inevitable resulting from this process and the individualization of salvation, in which the search for connections with high-ranking communist authorities, the attempts to recall extinguished acquaintances and distant relatives prove to be of crucial importance. The second cycle of violence that the author outlines has a wider scope and extends to the families of the victims. We are talking about a wide palette of expropriation of property, covering statutory and by-laws, confiscations (almost mandatory for all those convicted by the "People's Court"), nationalization, expropriation of property and reaching outright robbery, extortion and brutal looting. The numerous such cases cited usually unfold in the context of the invariably in such cases "compulsory residence construction" of these people. Here the author makes a distinction between emigration and internment, which, however, is not made in many scientific studies. Although Martin Ivanov's work has a completely scientific character, it should be noted that it is also quite emotional, in places - I would say - and shocking. One of the most painful pages of the exhibition is dedicated to the stories of the evicted families - to their drama when parting with their own home, to the fear and uncertainty of their future fate, to the efforts to survive in the new, sometimes very hostile environment. The third round of repressions, which Ivanov outlines, derives from the first two and refers mostly to "the children of the enemies of the people". It is about their periodic affectation by official purges carried out during every intra-bloc crisis in the 1950s - 1980s, inability to continue their education, forced into housing restriction and self-densification, etc. Here the researcher has also presented quite a wide range from milder but persistent forms of violence and discrimination. He also makes another generational classification of the group, distinguishing three generations of "former people". The first generation - according to him - are the people who were of active age during the coup of 09/09/1944 and immediately endured the harshest wave of repression. The second generation - these are their children, some of whom have shared the drama of their parents to a significant extent and have been displaced and discriminated against in various ways. Another, perhaps most of this second generation, was affected rather indirectly, the families themselves tried to hide, as much as possible, their own drama and spare their children their own traumas. And the third generation - these are the grandchildren of the authentic "former people" who, parallel to the general process of softening the regime in the 70s and 80s of the 20th century, only episodically and generally incidentally felt the "glass ceiling" in your education and your professional path.

At the end of this part of the presentation, Martin Ivanov tried to combine the qualitative methodology he used with quantitative data, relying on the primary sociological surveys from the study of the Central Statistical Office (now NSI) "The City and the Village, 86". He tried to

isolate from the collected data information about the second and, respectively, the third generation of "former people", using different filters for the data on the education and profession of the fathers. Although he himself made the stipulation that at the time when the surveys were filled out, it was quite natural for the respondents to try to hide any connection with "those affected by the measures of the people's power", he still fully trusted the information collected. The other methodological problem in the processing of these data is putting a sign of approximate equality between the categories "pre-revolutionary elite" and "former people". In this sense, the average values obtained by the author, presented in tables for educational, property, professional and even "intellectual" status, seem too stigmatizing and unconvincing.

In the second part of the presentation, the author again returns to qualitative research methods, examining the various strategies of "former people" for survival and reconversion. Analyzing the huge variety of cases, Ivanov summarizes them into four behavioral archetypes. The first of these is of those who try, successfully or not, to escape abroad. We are talking about the so-called "non-returnees" or "traitors to the homeland" (IR - in DS terminology) from the regime. To this archetype, he adds those who tried to escape from life in general - ending up with suicide or complete alcoholism. The second - according to him - is of those who choose the path of resistance - overt or hidden - depending on the conditions and context. Here we are talking about those who, in the period up to 1947, were openly members of the opposition parties, about the firebrands, about the distributors of leaflets and appeals, etc. Because these issues are relatively well explored in the existing literature, the author has rather flagged them to outline the profile of this behavioral archetype. The third category, according to him, is the people who chose the tactics of reconciliation and compromise. It is probably also the most numerous group of "former people", especially in the later decades of the regime's existence. Typologically, this group has something in common with the fourth behavioral archetype outlined by Ivanov, namely, those who have broken and repainted themselves. Here he presents a wide range of conscious and very often spontaneous strategies for survival, sometimes for reconversion and even for inclusion in the new communist elite, known to us both from literature and from life. Of course, this entire process is carefully managed and directed by State Security, which, if only as context, is present throughout the study.

If they must be summarized, the merits and contributions of peer-reviewed scientific work are impressive. With it, in practice, the huge memoir array created by those repressed by the communist regime was identified and quantitatively traversed. The entire wave of memoirs after 11/10/1989 and a biographical array are included in the scientific circulation. Methodologically, the problem with the DS documents and their deceptive informativeness is placed before science, and before the Bulgarian public. The question is also raised whether it is possible to analyze this avalanche of human destinies with any quantitative methods. Martin Ivanov makes every effort to convince us that this is possible, although I myself remain skeptical of the results obtained. Perhaps the most important contribution of this study lies in the question raised in the epilogue of the book, how and to what extent the memory of what happened has relevance for the present day and how memory of the past functions in general.

### **3. Teaching activity**

Associate Professor Martin Ivanov is already an established teacher with almost 10 years of teaching work at Sofia University. As can be seen from the Academic Reference attached to the documents, he teaches bachelor's and master's courses on Political Life in Modern Bulgaria; Political and economic elites of Bulgaria; Modernization processes in Bulgarian society; Economic statistics, etc. Indeed, due to his long leave of absence due to his government positions, at this stage he has only one successfully defended diploma and no doctoral students. However, this indicator is compensated pointwise many times in the other categories. To what has been said so far should be added his great administrative experience as chairman of the State Agency "Archives", acting minister of culture and ambassador of the Republic of Bulgaria in the Republic of Finland. I mention this because I am deeply convinced that all this gives a much wider horizon, and combining theoretical training with administrative experience is one of the recipes for a successful teaching career.

### **4. Conclusion**

I have not found plagiarism anywhere in the reviewed works. All of them have an original character. Everything stated above gives me sufficient reason to vote "for" in the election of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hab. Martin Ivanov Ivanov to the academic position of "professor" and convinced to call on the other members of the scientific jury to support this election.

Sofia, 20/08/2024

Reviewer:

/ Assoc. Prof. Mihail Gruev, PhD/