

REVIEW
of the scientific achievements and academic work
of Assoc. Prof. Martin Ivanov, DSc,
Candidate in the Competition for the Academic Position of Professor in
Professional field 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Studies (Sociology -
Historical Sociology), announced in State Gazette #32 of 09.04.2024, announced by
Department of Sociology, Faculty of Philosophy, Sofia University “St. Kliment
Ohridski”
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The competition for the academic position of Professor in the professional field 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Studies (Sociology - Historical Sociology) was announced in issue #32 of the State Gazette of 9 April 2024. The only participant of this competition is Assoc. Prof. Martin Ivanov, DSc. On the basis of the candidate's self-assessment and other documents, it can be concluded that Martin Ivanov meets all the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria for participation in the competition for the academic position of Professor.

The candidate obtained the educational and scientific degree Doctor in 1999 with a dissertation on “Economic and Financial Problems in the Foreign Policy of the People's Bloc, 1931-1934”. He has held the academic position of associate professor since 2008 and has 16 years of experience as an Associate Professor (from 2008 to 2015 at the Institute for Historical Studies of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, and then at the Department of Sociology of the Faculty of Philosophy of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”). He obtained the degree of Doctor of Sociological Sciences in 2021. The candidate has a total of 9 years of teaching experience at Sofia University. During the past years, Assoc. Prof. Martin Ivanov has a rich and successful academic and public biography, as well as significant scientific achievements. At the time of the announcement of the competition he has 8 published monographs, several dozens of scientific articles, published not only in Bulgarian,

but also in renowned international journals and academic publishing houses. His status as one of the established researchers in the field of historical sociology is marked by numerous citations of his works by other Bulgarian and foreign scholars. His scientific research is mainly, but not exclusively, related to the period of communism in Bulgaria, and his approach is characterized by successful combination of historical and sociological methodology.

These characteristics can also be seen in the main monographic work submitted for this competition, entitled “The 'Former People' of Concentration Camp Bulgaria”, published by Ciela in 2024.

The monograph presents a study of a specific social group - the group of the declassified and marginalized during the communist era representatives of the “former elite” and their two generations of descendants. Thus stated, the purpose of the study faces many challenges - defining this social group by specific attributes, determining its social significance, including the size of this social group. Last but not least, the very fact that the object of study is a marginalized group means that information about it cannot be acquired solely through classical historical sources. The term 'former people' itself, although used by the documents of the communist regime itself and by the historical community and society today, is difficult to define and clearly classify.

It can be said that the author has successfully met these challenges, which also allows him to make the most thorough analysis to date of this social group. This is due primarily to the variety of sources used by the author. For the study he uses the classic historical sources, represented by archival documents (among which the documents used from the archive of the Commission on Files are also impressive) and they present the institutionalized point of view of the state towards this group. A large volume of personal interviews (oral histories) conducted by the author specifically for this monograph, as well as his use of numerous memoirs of representatives of this social group, help to achieve research depth of the study. As a basis for the broader conclusions are used also the archives of a television program.

The monograph has a clear structure, as it is divided into two main parts, respectively chapters. The first chapter, entitled “In the Circles of Hell: from Terror to

Discrimination”, is devoted to the fate of this social group immediately after 9 September 1944 and the policies of its marginalization in the totalitarian state. The second chapter, “Strategies of Survival and Reconversion”, deals with the strategies of ‘reconversion’ of the symbolic capital of the representatives of this social group in the communist society.

The introduction, explanation and analysis of the term ‘reconversion’ is one of the major methodological successes of this study. The term, borrowed from the French sociological tradition, is explained in the introduction as “the social reproduction through the recombination of four types of capital, economic, cultural, social and symbolic, which assist the maintenance and transmission from generation to generation of existing social relations”. This term is used in the study to explain the survival strategies of the representatives of the group of “former people” and their descendants in the communist society. In the study, the author convincingly questions the validity for Bulgaria of the conclusions drawn by foreign authors about the Soviet post-revolutionary reality, who made the generalization about the successful “reconversion” of the representatives of the Russian aristocracy into the Soviet reality. In the concluding part, “The Surviving Memory”, the author reflects on and tries to answer the question of how the representatives of the third generation fit and are represented in the post-communist Bulgarian society.

Impressive is also the authors’ very good knowledge of both the historical and sociological literature on the subject. This is an important advantage insofar as especially with regard to the first part of the study, that on the fate of the “former people”, much has been written in Bulgarian historiography. The second part of the study, in which the author examines, analyzes, and classifies the strategies developed by the representatives of these elites to survive and adapt to the new conditions, to ‘reconvert’, could be characterized as the main contribution and achievement of the study. Based on numerous interviews and memoir accounts, he summarizes and argues for the existence of “four basic behavioral archetypes among the “the former people”. The first includes those who decided to escape - abroad or from life in general. The majority of the rest ... face three other options: resistance (overt or tacit), acquiescence (or condescension), or breaking (and ‘repainting’)” (p. 216). What is striking in this section are the subtle nuances the author captures about the maintenance of social difference by this social group under new conditions (the clothing, the walks in the mountains, the listening to foreign radio stations, the marriages within this

circle), summarized as unintentional strategies that made possible the maintenance of a sense of difference in this social group.

From a purely methodological point of view, I am particularly interested in the author's reflections on the value and credibility of the documents created and preserved by the State Security - without denying the value of these documents, the author maintains his skeptical and critical attitude towards them, which is a sign of research integrity, as well as the lack of sensationalism in the research, which I consider a significant advantage.

In conclusion, the monograph represents the most thorough study of this social group to date, with accurate findings and analyses that will be used and cited by other researchers in the future. The study is notable for its accurate sociological dissections and generalizations, and for maintaining a precise balance between the researcher's detachment and an explicable (and justified) sympathy for this social group that was marginalized during the period under study.

In addition to the main monographic work submitted for the competition, Martin Ivanov is the author of 7 other monographs, with the main research object economic history of Bulgaria, written independently or in co-authorship. Some of them are related to economic history under communism (*Reformism without Reforms: The Political Economy of Bulgarian Communism, 1963-1989*. Sofia. 2007; *Bulgarian Foreign Debt 1944-1989. The Bankruptcy of the Communist Economy*. Sofia. 2007, co-authored), while others are devoted to the ups and downs of Bulgaria's economic history in the era of modernization (*The Political Games with Foreign Debt. Bulgarian Examples of Economic Crises and Rise*. Sofia. 2002; *Bulgaria's Gross Domestic Product. 1870-1945*. Sofia. 2012; *Against the Current: The Bulgarian Textile Industry, 1800-1912*. Sofia. 2021). Some of the results of these studies have also been presented in articles published in established international journals such as *Economic History Review*, *Journal of Economic History*, *East-Central Europe* or scholarly publishers such as *Routledge*.

The overall activity of Martin Ivanov allows to make the generalization that he is one of the established researchers in the field of economic history and historical sociology, formal proof of which are the numerous citations of his research by Bulgarian and foreign authors. More importantly, from the very beginning of his scientific career he has shown an

ability to follow independent research paths, which over the years has also turned him into one of the authors with significant achievements in the study of the economic history of the recent past, without succumbing to unnecessary ideological or political pathos and prejudices. Martin Ivanov is one of the established Bulgarian researchers in the field of history and sociology, with a wide range of publications in Bulgaria and abroad, while his research is characterized by conscientiousness and thoroughness. His co-authored monographs and articles are also evidence of his ability to work in a team.

These academic achievements are complemented by the candidate's extensive teaching activities, including a number of university courses developed by him, as well as his participation in several research projects.

In addition to his academic career, the candidate has a rich and successful public biography - editor of the magazine "Democratic Review" (1994-2004), Chairman of the State Agency "Archives" (2011-2013), Minister of Culture in a caretaker government (2014), Secretary to the President of the Republic of Bulgaria for Education, Culture and National Identity (2013-2016), Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Bulgaria to the Republic of Finland and the Republic of Estonia (2016-2020). Unfortunately, the public and political situation in Bulgaria in recent years has been such that such high public and governmental positions are not always proof of a candidate's credibility and integrity. Fortunately, this is not the case, as Martin Ivanov has undoubted achievements in his public activities and generally enjoys the reputation of being a very good expert and administrator in the positions he has held. Therefore, I can say with conviction that this public record fully supports his candidacy for the academic position of Professor.

My personal impressions of the candidate, whom I know as one of the founders and first members of the expert council for the research programs of the Institute for the Study of the Recent Past, speak for themselves. My impressions of the nominee are excellent, and I can particularly highlight his exceptional diligence, work ethic, and scholarly discipline. The combination of these qualities with his linguistic background, as well as his ability to quickly and successfully process large amounts of information (archival documents and statistical data), is the basis for his successful academic career and achievements.

This is also the reason why my recommendations are limited. The only more substantial recommendation I have is that in the future he should make an effort to publish more in reputable foreign academic journals. Not because they are currently insufficient, nor for the sake of accumulating points and covering so-called "science metrics", but because he is one of the researchers who can successfully present the significant achievements of Bulgarian historical and sociological science in the international scientific circulation.

Conclusion: The overall research, publishing, teaching and public activity of Assoc. Prof. Martin Ivanov, DSc. gives all the reasons for his election as Professor in the professional field 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Studies (Sociology - Historical Sociology). Therefore, as a member of the Scientific Jury, I will vote FOR his election with full conviction.

Sofia, 20 August 2024

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