

STATEMENT

Regarding the competition for the occupation of the academic position of "Professor" in professional direction 3.1 Sociology, anthropology and sciences culture (Sociology - historical sociology), announced in SN, no. 32 of 09.04.2024

Sole participant: **Assoc. Professor, Ph.D. Martin Ivanov Ivanov**, lecturer in the Department of Sociology, Faculty of Philosophy of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski".

From: **Prof. Dr. Boyan Ivaylov Znepolski**, Department of Sociology, Faculty of Philosophy of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski"

Review and evaluation of publications

The main work of Assoc. Prof. Martin Ivanov, on which my statement will focus, is "The former people" of concentration camp Bulgaria". Martin Ivanov's monograph is a large-scale, systematic, in-depth and conceptually well-grounded reconstruction of the fate of hundreds of thousands of Bulgarian citizens who, after September 9 1944, fall into the category of so-called "former people". The study is therefore dedicated to an extremely important topic, important not only from a historical point of view - not to forget the numerous victims of the communist regime and, accordingly, its repressive mechanisms and strategies, but also from a sociological point of view - to outline the profile and boundaries of a great social transformation that occurs precisely through the political repressions carried out on the representatives of the "enemy" class. In this sense, fully in line with its ambitious research task, Martin Ivanov's monograph is built as a historical-sociological study, which, based on the analysis of dozens of individual cases, succeeds in: 1) reconstructing the fate of several generations of Bulgarian citizens, having a class unreliable origins from the point of view of the communist authorities; 2) to show how after September 9 1944, a drastic replacement of the elites in Bulgarian society was carried out through the physical erasure or the social declassification of the "former" bourgeois elites; 3) to outline a politically provoked and maintained social rift between the "former" and "current" people, which with varying degrees of brutality and intensity continued to define the general atmosphere and individual biographical trajectories in Bulgarian society until the very end of the communist regime in November 1989.

The monograph "Former people" of concentration camp Bulgaria" is divided into two main parts, responding to two interconnected problems: on the one hand, the forms of repression and discrimination exercised on "former people"; on the other hand, the victims' strategies of resistance, survival and adaptation to the new regime and the new society. The first part begins by tracing the various forms of physical elimination of the "former people"—the extrajudicial killings immediately after 9/9, the verdicts of the People's Court, the thousands who passed through the communist camps—and then moves on to seemingly "more "soft" forms of discrimination. The contribution of the monograph consists of emphasizing the various forms of discrimination - confiscation of property, evictions, dismissals, obstruction of professional development, revocation of the right to access higher education, revocation of the right to travel abroad, etc. These forms of discrimination, to a greater extent than physical repressions, contribute to the crushing of the "class enemy", because precisely through their massiveness and durability (as the author points out, in one form or another, to one degree or another, they accompany the regime from the beginning to its end) the social declassification and marginalization, the mental and moral breakdown of the "former people" takes place. Thus the "former people" have been turned into disenfranchised and depersonalized subjects of the regime. The personal testimonies of the numerous victims, who, quoted by the author, fill the pages of the monograph, testify to a repressive power as powerful and terrible as it is devoid of clear principles and rules, a power that is largely subordinated to the personal arbitrariness of those in power, of their subjectivity and of chance. It is a power, whose systematicity and methodicality is paradoxically reinforced by the arbitrariness and subjectivism of those who have it and exercise it.

In the second part of the monograph, quite appropriately in view of the historical situation, relatively little space is devoted to the organized armed resistance against the communist regime, represented mostly by the Goryani movement. The survival and adaptation of the "ex" to the new social conditions depends on their own efforts, on the sympathy of their families, on the few remaining friends. The destructive effects of the communist regime's repressions are expressed precisely in the fact that they divide and atomize the victims, break solidarity and empathy, destroy former social bonds. In this way, one's own survival finds itself faced with hard-to-solve moral dilemmas: to resolutely oppose the regime and perish; to isolate yourself in your own

world and lead a marginal and deprived existence; to cooperate moderately with the regime and receive relatively good chances for professional realization; to devote yourself fully to the regime and reap the fruits of its benevolence. In the monograph, such dilemmas are not explicitly formulated, they appear in the background and in the course of the presented life stories, and the author himself, quite reasonably, is in no hurry to pass judgments, to privilege one choice over another. Martin Ivanov leaves the impression that, according to him, the regime is primarily responsible for the situation in which the "formers" are placed - the situation of victims. However, the author's analyzes suggest that the regime's responsibility does not absolve the victims themselves of responsibility, who, even in difficult life conditions, do not lose their freedom of choice. It is this individual moral choice that separates and distinguishes the biographical trajectories of the "formers".

Notes, comments and questions

Like any ambitious and large-scale study, Martin Ivanov's monograph raises some notes, as well as a number of comments and questions. I will point out some of them. With regard to the composition, it seems to me that the analysis of the results of the research of Petko Simeonov and his team from 1986 "The City and the Village-86", which in its design, methodology and style is quite unsimilar to the presentation in Martin Ivanov's monograph, should generally find a place among the appendices to the book. Second point regarding the composition – the chapter on the "bourgeois scumbags" and the "painters" should be larger and at least a few typical individual trajectories should be indicated in it. In Martin Ivanov's monograph, only a few pages are devoted to this category (pp. 294-298), as if to avoid tarnishing the memory of the "formers" - a concern that is unfounded in view of the overall spirit of the book. From a methodological point of view - Martin Ivanov quite appropriately uses the heuristic possibilities of the comparative method, but the comparisons between the Bulgarian situation and the situation in the USSR are perhaps not as indicative and useful, as the author himself establishes, as would be the comparisons between Bulgaria and other - smaller countries from the "soviet block" who were closer in scale and historical destiny. Also from a methodological point of view – sometimes the author seems to overtrust his respondents and the authors of memoirs. But the concept of "biographical illusion" is well known in the sociological literature. Introduced by Pierre Bourdieu, it reveals that the autobiographical narrative is an "artificial construction of meaning" and

the narrator is an "ideologue of his own life". In this sense, autobiographical narratives, even when they are narratives of victims of political repressions, must be interpreted cautiously and with a critical distance.

Academic contributions and achievements of Martin Ivanov

Martin Ivanov's monograph "Former people of concentration camp Bulgaria" represents an innovative, systematic and detailed study - through the application of qualitative research methods, as well as through secondary analysis of results from quantitative sociological surveys - of the fate of hundreds of Bulgarian citizens, a study which, however, is indicative of the fate of hundreds of thousands of their fellow citizens during the years of the communist regime. The main contribution of the monograph is the careful and precise categorization of the various mechanisms of repression and discrimination of the "former people". Through the fate of the victims, through personal biographical testimonies, the author simultaneously reveals the main features of the repressive apparatus of the communist regime. An indisputable contribution of Martin Ivanov's monograph is that it preserves the subjectivity of "former people" and reveals the richness of individual destinies - subjected to similar repressions, "former people" make different moral choices, take different decisions, which also determines their biographical trajectories. From a methodological point of view, Martin Ivanov's contribution is the questioning of the State Security archives available to the Dossier Committee, which in many cases do not immediately represent a reliable source of information.

Last but not least, Martin Ivanov's monograph is very well written, it is enjoyable to read, proving that academic publications do not necessarily have to be written in a heavy administrative style or overloaded with technical terms to prove their scientific worth.

The documentation for candidacy for the competition, attached by Assoc. Professor Martin Ivanov, is fully indicative of the candidate's academic merits. The numerous publications, the large number of publications (16 items) included in the competition, the large number of citations, participation in scientific conferences, scientific projects, etc., give additional weight to the contributions indicated on the occasion of the monograph "Former people" of concentration camp Bulgaria".

The contributions listed in the application describe realistically, adequately and in detail the author's contributions.

Conclusion

The high scientific qualities and contributions of the scientific publications, as well as my personal impressions of the candidate, give me the reason, without any hesitation, to recommend to the respected members of the scientific jury to vote unanimously YES Assoc. Prof. Martin Ivanov Ivanov to take the academic position of "Professor" in the Department of Sociology of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" - Professional direction 3.1. Sociology, anthropology and sciences of culture (Sociology - historical sociology).

Sofia, 19.08.2024

Prof. Dr. Boyan Znepolski