



OPINION¹

on the submitted works for participation in a competition for the academic position of ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR / PROFESSOR in professional field 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences (Multiculturalism and Media) , announced by Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” in SJ, issue 61

Reviewer: Prof. D.Sc. Petranka Fileva

Candidate: Associate Professor Dr. Svetlozar Kirilov

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Svetlozar Kirilov Ivanov is the only candidate in the current competition for professor. For more than 30 years, he worked as a researcher and teacher at the FJMK of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" in the field of sociology and media. His interests are consistently focused on the study of the influence of culture and religion on social and economic processes in smaller or larger communities. After studying the social transformation in Bulgaria and Eastern Europe, including the place of the media in the transition processes, Prof. Kirilov firmly and steadily established himself as a researcher of minority groups, locked in the vicious circle of the ghettos, infected by the so-called culture of poverty.

In his capacity as a teacher, Kirilov always adheres to high standards of education with an emphasis on the creative development of students. His approach is characterized by a continuous search for feedback and consideration of student expectations. He leads significant academic disciplines in the bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees of study at the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication of the Sofia University. The disciplines taught by him are in the field of the announced competition. The discipline "Multiculturalism, Minorities and Media" in the bachelor's degree is upgraded with the more narrowly defined discipline "Migration, Multiculturalism and Media" in the Master's program "International Journalism" and with "Race, Ethnicity and Religion in the Multicultural Society" in the doctoral program at FJMK .

Under the guidance of Prof. Kirilov, 43 diploma theses were defended in the field of multiculturalism, with topics reflecting Roma and Roma inclusion, refugees, racism in sports and football hooliganism, ethical aspects of journalism.

I. Evaluation of the scientific and practical results and contributions of the scientific and educational production submitted for participation in the competition

Kirilov appears in the competition for professor with 11 papers (one of them in English) and 12 articles (three of them in English) and one monograph. Some of the cases presented in the publications are included in a revised and synthesized form in the monograph. In the appendices to the monograph, we find his own photographic material of high artistic value, reflecting the candidate's impressive field work. The large number of references and the precisely presented bibliography in the publications and in the monograph are proof of the precision of the research work.

¹ Note: Recommended volume of the opinion - 2-3 standard pages.



First of all, I will note the apparent consistency, persistence and thoroughness in the publications submitted for review. Academic activity and scholarly interests are steadily in the field of multiculturalism, particularly in the field of media coverage of racial and ethnic minorities. The success and persuasiveness of his publications is due to fieldwork in Roma neighborhoods in Bulgaria for 10 years, as well as in black ghettos and Latino neighborhoods in the United States. I note the importance of two research projects he led on Roma studies and four projects during specializations in the US.

The main monograph submitted for participation in the competition - "Discriminated or guilty? Roma in Bulgaria and Blacks in the USA", University Publishing House "St. Kliment Ohridski" 2021. ISBN 978-954-07-5339-3, examines the problems of both communities and successfully exposes the clash between the normative vision of multiculturalism with its respect for all cultures, and the cultural explanation of social development, which points out that some cultures are problematic.

I would define the choice of the topic, the analysis and the comparisons in the monographic work, as a justification of a new scientific field with contributions in the field of sociology and multiculturalism. Roma in Bulgaria and Afroamericans in the USA are poor, with a high level of unemployment, the majority consider them dangerous, problematic, unreliable and unwilling to integrate. Investigating the reasons for the poorer situation of Roma and African Americans, Kirilov offers two explanations, engaging in the complex scientific debate as to whether structural or cultural factors are decisive, and concludes that definitely both structural and cultural forces contribute to the more difficult position of minorities, mutually reinforcing.

It has been successfully argued that conflicts between people of different ethnic, racial, and religious communities are due to three main causes: 1) Prejudice and ethnocentrism, 2) Competition for limited resources, and 3) Fundamental differences in values and norms.

Among the contributions of the habilitation work, I will point out the in-depth study of the Roma in Bulgaria, of their roots and history, of the reasons for the variety of identities claimed by them. I accept that what is new in what Kirilov has achieved is the combination of well-systematized knowledge about the Roma population in our country with a justified attribution of the marks of the so-called "lower class" bearing the specific culture of poverty.

It is important to note that for both groups under consideration, confined to the slums and ghettos, infected by the culture of poverty and the marks of the "lower class", Kirilov irrevocably adds the factors of discrimination and rejection that contribute to their worse situation. Because if there is no suitable integration model, we end up with immigrant, ethnic or racial ghettos, where minorities feel "at home", protected from the hostility and discrimination of the macro-society, as is the case with the Roma neighborhoods in Bulgaria. An important conclusion is that the culture of poverty and the "culture of resistance" among Roma and African Americans is to a certain extent formed due to the attitude of the macro-society towards them.

The third part of the monograph is dedicated to the media and their potential to deepen the gap or, conversely, to achieve, albeit slowly, an improvement in the environment for social integration, communication and breaking down stereotypes and walls. According to the author, the media, education and art can help the mutual understanding of majorities and minorities, but if their content is intolerant and ethnocentric, or even aggressively nationalistic, they can contribute to the opposite - creating prejudices, forming intolerance and



inflaming of hatred. Well acquainted with the causes and consequences of the isolation of the two groups, the author offers media workers rules for objective coverage of the "others". It does so with many examples and caveats on the complex issue of whether the media can negatively portray individual members of a specific ethnic, racial, religious or other community, which could contribute to the formation of a negative image of the entire community, and whether entire communities can be criticized for perceived negative traits they possess.

All publications are on the topic of the current competition and are evidence of the consistent and full participation in the development of a relatively new scientific field in the field of sociology and multiculturalism. The academic and research achievements of Associate Professor Kirilov are evidenced by the citations of his works in scientific publications - proof of the response from the research and the evaluation of the results of his scientific work.

II. Notes and recommendations

Regardless of the numerous coincidences in the fate of the Roma and African Americans, there are also many differences in the socio-cultural, institutional and economic environment in Bulgaria and in the USA. Including competition for limited resources, indicated by the author as one of the causes of conflicts between people of different ethnic, racial and religious communities. Interesting are the comparisons he draws with the more successful integration of refugees and migrants of various ethnic and religious groups into the American economy, subject to motives lacking in many African Americans infected by a culture of poverty. Expecting that similar processes will develop in Bulgaria in the process of upcoming social and economic transformations, I would recommend that in further research the author undertakes studies on the relations between Roma, refugees and migrants in Bulgaria, perhaps comparing the level of tolerance towards refugees and migrants by the Roma and the Bulgarians.

III. Conclusion

Based on the overall analysis of the teaching and especially the research activities and the achievements of Assoc. Associate Professor Kirilov - the only candidate in the competition for the academic position of "Professor" in "Multiculturalism and Media" in professional direction 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences, announced by the Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski", I am convinced that Associate Professor Dr. Svetlozar Kirilov Ivanov fully meets the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and I recommend the respected members of the scientific jury to support his candidacy.

Jury member: Prof. D.Sc. Petranka Fileva

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