

R E V I E W

on the scientific production, teaching and other activities of Assoc. Prof. Aleksander Mihaylov Sivilov PhD, participant in the competition for the academic post of "Professor" in scientific specialty 2.2. History and Archaeology, specialty "New and Contemporary World History" (Modern History - History of the United States and Latin America), published in the State Gazette, # 99 of November 22, 2024.

by Prof. Iskra Baeva PhD, Lecturer in Contemporary History at the Faculty of History, Sofia University „Kliment Ohridski“

The competition for a professorship was proposed by the Department of New and Modern History and announced by a decision of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of History at its meeting on December 17, 1924. (Protocol No. 3) and by order of the Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski" No. RD-38-18/ 13.01.2025

The competition for a professorship was proposed by the Department of New and Modern History and announced by a decision of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of History at its meeting on December 17, 1924. (Protocol No. 3) and by order of the Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski" No. RD-38-18/ 13.01.2025

The candidate for the academic position "professor" Assoc. Prof. Alexander Mihailov Sivilov PhD presented himself in the competition with two monographs, 11 scientific publications, solid teaching activity, specializations, participation in scientific projects and various other activities.

1. Personal data of the contest participant

Assoc. Prof. Alexander Sivilov was born on March 25, 1980. in Sofia. After completing his secondary education, he was accepted as a student in the bachelor's program "History" at the Faculty of History of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" in 2002, where he specialized in History of Russia. He continued his studies in the Master's program "History of Russia", administered

by the Department of New and Modern History, which he completed with an excellent defense of the master's thesis on the topic “Mikhail Gorbachev and Nikolai Ryzhkov - two perspectives on the reconstruction”, for which I was the supervisor. After winning a competition, he was enrolled in the doctoral program of the Department of New and Modern History in 2004. with supervisor prof. Dean Dragomir Draganov. In accordance with the scientific research of prof. Draganov Alexander Sivilov redirected his interest to Latin America, which undoubtedly helped him expand his horizons in the field of world history. Alexander Sivilov defended his thesis on “Transitions in Chile (1973-1993)” on May 12, 2009. before the Specialized Scientific Council on New and Recent History of the Higher Attestation Commission. Again after a competition in February 2010. he was appointed assistant professor of modern history in the Department of New and Modern History, and only a year later was elected senior assistant professor. Six years later, on June 12, 2017, the Faculty of History of the Sofia University of St. Kl. Ohridski chooses him as an associate professor in the same department, as he has been up to the moment of the current competition. At the same time, in November 2019, he was elected head of the Department of New and Modern History, and four years later he was re-elected to this position.

2. The teaching biography of Assoc. Prof. Alexander Sivilov

Because the competition is for a professor at the University, in the first place in my evaluation of the candidate for this position, I will place the teaching activity of Assoc. Prof. Alexander Sivilov. For the past 15 years as a teacher at the Faculty of History of the Sofia University of St. Kliment Ohridski he conducted seminars on “Contemporary History” and “History of the Soviet Union”, and in parallel he prepared and read compulsory and optional lecture courses on a significant number of historical disciplines not only in the History Faculty, but also in the Faculty of Law.

In the undergraduate programs of the Faculty of History, Assoc. Prof. Sivilov has read the following courses: “History of Eastern Europe and Russia in the 20th century.” (for students of the majors: History, History and foreign language, History and philosophy), “Revolutions and dictatorships in Latin America”, “The Red Army to the End of the Second World War 1818-1845.” and “Industrialization and Collectivization in the USSR” (all by History students), as well as “History of Russia during 20th century” by Erasmus students.

In the bachelor's program in "International Relations" of the Faculty of Law, Assoc. Prof. Sivilov has taught the following two courses: "Region: Latin America" and "Region: North America".

In the master's program "History and Modernity of Russia, East Asia and Eurasia" of the Faculty of History Assoc. Prof. Sivilov has taught the courses: "The Soviet Union in international relations before the Second World War", "Russia and the countries of East Asia", "USSR and the radical left in the Western world" and "USSR and Latin America". In the master's program "Regional dimensions of Global Tendencies - China, East, and South-East Europe" he has taught the course "Russia as geopolitical factor in Europe and East Asia 1991 – 2018".

In addition to these undergraduate and graduate lecture courses, Assoc. Prof. Sivilov has also joined the doctoral preparation with two courses: "The Entry and Development of Left-Wing Ideologies in the Americas" and "Soviet-American Relations to the Beginning of the Cold War."

Part of the teaching activity is also the supervision of the independent work of the students from the master's and doctoral programs. Assoc. Prof. Sivilov supervised the master's theses of the students of the MP "History and Modernity of Russia, East Asia and Eurasia": Pavel Perperliev on the topic "Soviet-Bulgarian relations in the period from 1939 until 1944." and Radoslav Hubenov "The role of Lend-Lease in the Great Patriotic War 1941-1945". He was also the supervisor of five doctoral students, two of whom have successfully defended their dissertations. These were Angel Apostolov, who in 2020 defended his thesis on "NATO and Russia 1992-2002", and Stefan Petrov, who defended in 2023 his thesis "The Russian Empire and the Anti-War Resistance in the Years of the First World War". Under the leadership of Assoc. Prof. Sivilov continued the preparation of their dissertations, Abel Rodriguez with the topic "Cuba under the rule of Raul Castro in the period 2006-2018", Elitsa Nenova with the topic "Diplomatic relations between Germany and Japan in the period 1936-1941" and Kristiyan Georgiev with the topic "Brazilian-Soviet relations in the period 1918-1953".

Teaching activity and individual work with students of Assoc. Prof. Al. Sivilov shows both the breadth of his interests and his ability to present his historical knowledge to the students of the mentioned two faculties of SU "St. Kl. Ohridski". These qualities are important and necessary for a professor at the University, as shown by the great interest of students in optional courses of Assoc. Prof. Sivilov. Therefore, it can be said that he has established himself among

the students and teachers not only of the Faculty of History, but also of SU “St. Kliment Ohridski” as a widely informed, knowledgeable lecturer who follows the development of international relations and recent events. My overall assessment of the teaching activity of Assoc. Prof. Alexander Sivilov is excellent.

3. Research activities and publications

Assoc. Prof. Sivilov applied to the competition for “professor” with two books and with his scientific production, which was not presented in the procedure for his habilitation, namely with 11 articles and studies on various problems of world history.

Most important for the evaluation of the scientific production of Assoc. Prof. Sivilov are the two books and, in particular, the 478-page monograph “Gangsters of the Dry Regime and the Great Depression in the Social History of the USA” published this year, which corresponds to the theme of his competition, so I will start with it.

Although the title puts the gangster problem first, in fact the content of the book is much broader, as it presents the author's view of the socio-economic and political history of the United States in the period between the two world wars. And this view can be seen most clearly from the fact that the emphasis is placed on social movements and the state of society in the two mentioned periods - during the Dry Regime and the Great Depression. It is not by chance that the author focused on these two crisis periods in interwar American history, which gave rise to two major challenges: the first is the attempt to solve moral problems by banning the production, import and consumption of alcohol, called the Dry Regime, and the second is the deepest financial and economic crisis in the United States up to that point (which later spread to Europe), rocked American society and forced the Democratic administration of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to launch a Keynesian government intervention in the control of the economy called the New Deal.

In order to cognitively and analytically present these two periods, Assoc. Prof. Sivilov has constructed the complex structure of his book: three main chapters devoted respectively to the 1920s, the early 1930s and the main theme of gangsters, divided into numerous sub-themes and individual issues/biographies. It can certainly be said that in the book presenting above all the social history of the United States, the development of leftist social movements and struggles has been most consistently traced. This is also the difference of the book by Assoc. Prof. Sivilov from the publications on the history of the USA in the last decades in Bulgaria.

The other specificity of the book is that the explanatory discourse emphasizes such factors as the way of life, the birth of American mass culture, the role of music, the refraction of social problems through the prism of art (mostly in literature and cinema).

The gangsters claimed first in the title are introduced in the third final chapter, „Mafia, Gangsters and the Threat of Social Change“. It briefly tells the biographies of the most famous gangsters and mobsters, their path to the criminal world, their main manifestations and the end of their lives. This part of the book emphasizes its commercial nature, because it addresses the current and in Bulgaria topic of the formation of organized crime. And in this part of his book, Assoc. Prof; Sivilov has maintained his interest in the social preconditions for crime, trying to present some of the gangsters through the prism of „social banditry“ (according to Hobsbawm).

My comments on the book are related to clarifying the essence of some phenomena - e.g. that the post-war crisis was caused above all by the inevitable reconversion; the clearer delineation of the leading ideological thesis of the Republican Party of that time - hard individualism, since it was with this that the Republicans won the presidential elections three times. It seems to me that scattering Roosevelt's New Deal reforms throughout the book prevents readers from understanding its essence: how the Roosevelt administration fought the crisis of overproduction, what the overall logic of the New Deal is, and how it relates to Keynesianism. Most of my notes are editorial, related to the spelling of certain words. I also have one disagreement with the arrangement of the bibliography, in which the publications in Latin are listed first, and they should be in Cyrillic, because that is the language in which the book was written.

My overall assessment of the book is that it successfully fulfills the role of a habilitation thesis that substantiates its author's transition to the higher level of academic growth.

The second book, which is included in the documentation of the competition of Assoc. Prof. A. Sivilov, is „Leaders, authoritarianism and transitions. On the example of Russia and Chile“ (2020, Book Rat, 183 p.). As can be seen from the title, it is dedicated to separate, albeit interrelated, topics, two of which again, as in the first book, refer to certain historical crisis periods: authoritarian rule and transitions from one system to another, and in the third, the author tries to give a hidden answer to the old question about the role of the personality in history. Unlike the first book, this one has a more political science nature, especially in the implementation of the first two themes, and history is present in the justification of the conclusions drawn.

In the first chapter of his book, Assoc. Prof. Sivilov gets involved in a big debate that started before the middle of the 20th century and continuing until the first decades of the 21st century, namely about the nature of the socio-political system in those countries that turn the history of the 20th century. – of fascist Italy, where fascism arose as a theory and practice, thanks to which Adolf Hitler took advantage of to build his powerful state, which tried to subjugate the whole of continental Europe, to the Soviet Union and to the Third Reich. At the center of this dispute is the political concept of „totalitarianism“. As a representative of the historical school Assoc. Prof. Sivilov justifiably doubts the applicability of the concept of totalitarianism in history. And he came to the conclusion that even in these countries the management system is more authoritarian than exemplary totalitarian. The various theoretical models of authoritarianism, among which the author seeks his position, were also presented in detail. Assoc. Prof. Sivilov has approached to the definition of transition, looking for arguments in the theses of transitology, and his own views matched with Samuel Huntington's ideas about the three waves of transitions to democracy. However, I think that before the analysis of transitions it would be good to clarify the nature of the different types of transition: transition between political regimes and transition between socio-political systems. Because it seems to me that the differences in the course of these two different transitions are also important for the systematization of transitions. I agree with the conclusions drawn about the „waning of transitology as a leading academic discipline“ and the unstable democracy of countries in transition, to which one more should be added, namely, the instability of democracy in traditional democratic countries as we observe today.

The other two chapters of the book have the character of an appendix and explanations to the first chapter, because they are dedicated to Boris Yeltsin and Gen. Augusto Pinochet, personifying the transitions in the countries mentioned in the title: Russia and Chile. These chapters are historical and followed the academic path of Assoc. Prof. Alexander Sivilov, who started with research on Soviet/Russian history and then moved on to Chile. Despite the fact that Russia and Chile are very different countries, the author has looked for and found similarities in the socio-political transformations they have gone through. The narrative about the place and role of Yeltsin and Pinochet has supplemented and illustrated the theses of the first chapter of the book.

The other scientific publications that Assoc. Prof. Sivilov has included in his participation in the competition, there are 11 of them and they were published in the period

from 2007 to 2024. Since we are long-time colleagues and know our activities well, I can point out that these are not all the publications of Assoc. Prof. Sivilov during the specified period, but it is his right to decide with which publications to participate in the competition. The mentioned publications represent the breadth of scientific activities of Assoc. Sivilov, because they are dedicated to different topics and different regions, as befits a teacher of modern world history. The main themes of these scholarly publications were twofold: Soviet and Latin American history with an emphasis on Chile, but to these should be added the articles presenting changes in international relations, again with a special focus on the Soviet Union/Russian Federation and the United States and their bilateral relations, as well as those in political science discourse. Some of the publications are dedicated to the great ideas that left their mark on a large part of the 20th century, others follow the actors in the Russian Civil War, the activities of the Comintern around the world, the Latin American clash of ideas and ideologies. The chronological scope of the research, spread over an entire century, is also considerable: from the last years of the First World War in the 20th century, until the 20s of the current 21st century.

My general impression of the research and publications of Assoc. Prof. Alexander Sivilov is positive because they show his broad historical interests and his willingness to enter into controversy with established theses in historiography. One of the specifics of his publications is that they are written in a figurative and readable language and style, which is due to his journalistic experience, preceding and accompanying his scientific career and his teaching activity.

4. Participation in research projects and scientific specializations

In the course of his scientific and teaching career, Assoc. Prof. Alexander Sivilov took part as a leader or as a member of scientific teams in various national scientific projects. The scientific research projects in which he has participated have varied topics. He led the scientific projects: „Development of research on the history, politics and culture of Latin America in Bulgaria“ since 2017. and „Dependency and Independence in Latin America and the World“ from 2018. He coordinated two other projects: „From regional conflicts to an era of global transformations: the point of view of Bulgarian and Russian historians towards international relations at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 21st century“ and „Personalities and transitions in Eastern Europe and South America after the Cold War“, and was a member of the scientific team of the project „The War for History - 75 years since the end of the Second World

War“ - all three realized since 2020. As can be seen from the topics of the scientific projects, they are aimed at deepening and expanding the knowledge of the two main directions in the scientific activity of Assoc. Prof. Sivilov.

The participation of Assoc. Prof. Alexander Sivilov in national scientific projects shows his ability to work in Bulgarian and international collectives, as well as to realize the achieved scientific product in collective and individual publications.

Assoc. Prof. A. Sivilov had the opportunity to carry out five specializations in countries of four continents, namely: March-May 2013. at Loyola University in Chicago, USA; in September-October 2016. at Meiji University in Tokyo, Japan; in September 2018 at Moscow State University, Moscow, Russian Federation; in September 2023 at the University of Buenos Aires, Argentina; in September-October 2023. at the University of Chile. It seems important to me to emphasize that the information accumulated during these specializations was subsequently realized in the books and publications of Assoc. Prof. Sivilov.

5. Evaluation of the scientific indicators of Assoc. Prof. Aleksander Sivilov PhD

The scientific production of Assoc. Prof. Alexander Sivilov meets the requirements of NACID for holding the academic position of professor. Its activity according to group of indicators **A** is **50** items, according to group of indicators **B** is **100** items, according to group of indicators **D** is **245** items, according to group of indicators **D** is **105** items. and by group of indicators **E** is **130** points. The total sum of the scientometric indicators of Assoc. Sivilov is **630** points, which exceeds the requirements for a candidate for the academic position of professor.

The indicated numerous and varied activities of Assoc. Prof. Alexander Silivov, as well as the citation of his research (14 citations are listed) in various scientific publications show his scientific recognition among the Bulgarian scientific community.

6. Other activities

Along with his scientific and teaching work, Assoc. Prof. Alexander Sivilov has carried out a variety of other activities that are directly or indirectly related to his professional activities at the Faculty of History of SU “St. Kl. Ohridski”.

Assoc. Prof. Sivilov delivered a lecture on “La Unión Sovética y las relaciones con Chile y América Latina desde los años 1960 a los años 1990” on October 11, 2023. at

Universidad de Chile. He participated in the 20th International Congress of Latin Americanists, held on September 19-23, 2023. in Buenos Aires, where he presented the topic “The Latin American Radical Left and the USSR during the 60's and 70's of the 20th century”, as well as at 9 scientific conferences in Bulgaria and abroad. He himself organized two international conferences: on October 18 and 19, 2018. on the topic “Dependence and Independence in Latin America and the World” on behalf of the Center for Latin American Studies at the “St. Kl. Ohridski” and on June 10-11, 2021. “Empires and post-empires: collapse, global transformations and conflicts”.

Before starting work at the Faculty of History of the SU “St. Kl. Ohridski” Assoc. Prof. Sivilov was a journalist, which gives a certain specificity to his activity as a university teacher. He continues to combine his historical knowledge with promotional activity in the following years. He did it in 2019. as an author in the journal “A-specto”, as the host of the historical program “About History – Free” on BSTV, as the author of the historical column “After the end of history” for the “Politically Incorrect” program of the BNR Horizon program in the period from 2020 to 2024. and continues from 2022. to this day making popular shows on his YouTube channel about history and politics “Smoke Screen”.

Among his other activities, associate professor Prof. Alexander Sivilov was deputy chief editor of the “Eurasia” Almanac (2012-2016), head of the Department of New and Modern History and member of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of History of SU “St. Kl. Ohridski”.

7. Conclusion

The review of the teaching, research activity and publications of Assoc. Prof. Alexander Mihailov Sivilov, devoted to a wide range of problems in the history of the Soviet Union/Russia, Latin America and the United States and his various other activities, give me every reason to recommend Assoc. Prof. Alexander Sivilov to be elected to the academic position of „professor“ in professional direction 2. 2. History and archaeology, specialty "New and latest general history" (Modern history - History of the USA and Latin America) for the needs of the department of New and modern history in the Faculty of History of SU „St. Kliment Ohridski“.

March 1, 2025

Reviewer: prof. Iskra Baeva PhD