

## OPINION

**for the scientific and creative activity of Assistant Prof. Dr. Yassen Borislavov Boychev, applicant for the academic position of Associate Professor at Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski by professional field 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences (Journalism - History of Bulgarian Journalism) in a competition announced in the State Gazette, issue. 65 of August 16, 2019.**

**Member of the Scientific Jury: Prof. D.Sc. Lubomir Stoykov**

### **1. Competition details**

The review and analysis of the submitted documents show that the present Associate Professor competition was duly announced by the Department of History and Theory of Journalism of the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication of Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski and published in the State Gazette, issue 65 of August 16, 2019.

The competition procedure is in accordance with the requirements of the new Rules for the terms and procedure for acquiring academic degrees and occupation of academic positions at Sofia University, adopted by a decision of the Academic Council on October 31, 2018, as amended by a decision of the Academic Council of May 29, 2019, as amended by a decision of the Academic Council of July 17, 2019, as amended by a decision of the Academic Council of September 25, 2019, as amended by a decision of the Academic Council of October 30, 2019, and complies with the criteria in the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act. The only applicant for the position of Associate Professor in the present competition is Assistant Prof. Dr. Yassen Borislavov.

### **2. Details of the applicant**

**Dr. Yassen Borislavov, Assistant Professor and Lecturer in the Department of History and Theory of Journalism at Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski has proven to be among the most competent specialists, researchers and university lecturers in the field of the history of Bulgarian print media and Bulgarian journalism. He is a first-rate analyst and commentator of Bulgarian satirical periodicals, as well as of the history of Bulgarian journalism, the culture of laughter, the lifestyle and the spirituality of Bulgarians, and partly in folk psychology, lifestyle and cultural anthropology.**

The candidate in this Associate Professor job competition has two higher education degrees - in journalism and in history at Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski. He defended a doctorate in history of Bulgarian journalism on the topic "Bulgarian satirical-humorous periodical press in the context of modernization (1863-1912)". He is the author of a number of scholarly and popular books and has twenty years of direct journalistic and editorial experience. Since 2013, he has been working at the Faculty for Journalism and Mass Communications at Sofia University St. K. Ohridski, holding the position of Assistant Professor and teaches subjects such as history of Bulgarian journalism, gourmet and media, master class and more.

Dr. Borislavov is part of a scientific, teaching and research tradition established in the past and further developed in the present century in the research in the history of Bulgarian

journalism established by scholars such as related to the names of Academician Vladimir Topencharov, Prof. Georgi Borshukov, Prof. Daffin Todorov, Prof. Philip Panayotov, Prof. Milko Petrov, Prof. Zdravka Konstantinova and others. It is common knowledge that Dr. Borislavov does not accept uncritically the theses and views of his teachers and predecessors, but often questions and debates their ideas. His writings are known and cited abroad, with the popularity of some being really impressive. A case in point is his scholarly article “Towards a Periodization of the History of Bulgarian Journalism,” which is the most read text in the online theoretical journal *Media and Public Communications*<sup>1</sup>- it has been read 133,990 times.

### **3. Evaluation criteria**

The scientific papers - monographs, studies, articles and other publications – submitted to the evaluation panel by Assistant Professor Dr. Yassen Borislavov, fully meet the required quantitative and qualitative requirements for participation in the competition for the academic position of Associate Professor. The report on the compliance with the minimum national requirements under Art. 26 of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act (scientific area 3. Social, business and legal sciences; professional field 3.5. Public communications and information sciences) indicates the following: - 50 points in indicators group A, 100 points in indicators group B, 255 points in indicators group D, and 80 points in indicators group E, which meets the evaluation criteria of the competition.

The fact that Dr. Borislavov has numerous citations in Bulgarian and foreign scientific journals is of particular significance. Information from the Library and Information Services Department of the University Library at Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski about indexed and cited publications shows dozens of references to his works, including in some of the world's most reputable scientific citation databases, such as Web of Science Clarivate Analytics (3 citations), Scopus ELSEVIER (3 citations), Central and Eastern European Online Library / CEEOL / (5 citations), Google Scholar (16 citations), etc.

### **4. Description and evaluation of scientific works**

Dr. Yassen Borislavov supports his application to the present competition for Associate Professor with the following research works:

- 2 monographs;
- 2 research papers;
- 4 articles.

It is important to note that the texts submitted in support of the application, as well as other supporting evidence of research excellence, differ from the content of the applicant's doctoral dissertation.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Media and Public Communications*. Ed. UNWE / Alma Communication. 2010, No. 5. Available from: <http://www.media-journal.info/?p=item&aid=89>.

**Dr. Borislavov's monograph *Bulgarian Satirical Press between the Two World Wars*<sup>2</sup> is an original and in-depth study, which also has a number of relevant contemporary messages.** It is pioneering in many aspects, as it offers a new and different perspective on the dynamics of the culture of laughter in Bulgaria between the two world wars. Not only does the author make a unique textual and sociological dissection of the satirical press of the 1920s and 1930s, but also makes an important differentiation between, on the one hand, politicized humor and, on the other, humor for entertainment in the Bulgarian periodicals.

In such key research segments as "The Intelligent Laughter of Rayko Alexiev and Sturec", "The Funny Alien World and the Bulgarian Parrots" and "The Badgering of 'Scourges'" exemplify some of the most important analytical skills of Dr. Borislavov, along with his ability to discern relevant patterns derived from a sea of texts, facts, cases, clashes and conflicts between social, political and journalistic realities. This is evidenced in his final words in the monograph: "During the post-war decades Bulgarian culture permanently sacralised suffering and pain as core values, a source of national wisdom and insight. This is evident in literature as well as in the plastic arts ... No paradigm is a final judgment, especially when it comes to a culture of laughter that, as it should have become clear, evolves and changes according to time and social environment" (pp. 189-190).

Dr. Borislavov's other works in studying and interpreting the history of Bulgarian journalism are also of particular importance:

*Bulgarian Journalism between the Two World Wars (1919-1939)*<sup>3</sup>;  
*The Politicized Laughter in the Bulgarian Satirical Periodicals between the Two World Wars*<sup>4</sup>;  
*Sava Dobroplodni and the New Bulgarian Bee Magazine (1887-1888)*.<sup>5</sup>

The studies and articles submitted to the competition meet the criteria for **scientific heuristic, problematic, persuasive reasoning and theoretical relevance**. This appraisal applies especially to publications such as: "The Rise and Fall of Bulgarian Journalism (1844-1944)", *Media and Public Communications*, no. 4 / January 2010; "The East Daily as a Chronicle of the Town of Sliven in the Decade between 1934 and 1944," *Annual Journal of Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski*, Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication. T. 23, 2016, 105-114. ISSN 1311-4883.

## 5. Scientific contributions

The works submitted to the competition contain significant scientific and applied contributions to the history of Bulgarian journalism, media and journalism, laughter culture, theory of humor, and - in part - to the areas of cultural studies, aesthetics, cultural anthropology and folk psychology.

---

<sup>2</sup> Sofia, 2019, 240 pp. ISBN 978-619-188-320-2.

<sup>3</sup> Sofia, Avangard Prima, 2010, 150 pp. ISBN 978-954-323-697-8

<sup>4</sup> *Annual Journal of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"*, Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication. Volume 25, 2019, 233-259. ISSN 1311-4883.

<sup>5</sup> *Annual Journal of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"*, Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication. 24, 2017, pp. 139-150. ISSN 1311-4883.

I acknowledge the scientific contributions made by the author, in particular highlighting that:

- The historical studies of Bulgarian periodicals and of domestic journalism have been enriched and advanced;

- In an original way, the satirical press has been defined into two main categories: politicized and ideologically driven humor, on the one hand, and entertaining tabloid-type humor, on the other.

- The foundations of a model for conceptualizing the history of humor and satirical-entertainment genres in Bulgarian journalism have been laid;

- For the first time, the special role of the first organizations of journalists and the legal conditions in which the Bulgarian press existed in the period between the two world wars (1919 – 1939) have been studied thoroughly and systematized.

## **6. Conclusion**

**Based on the above, as well as on the professional skills, intellectual prowess, academic dedication, integrity, and, of course, the scientific, applied and practical contributions of Dr. Borislavov in the field of the history of Bulgarian journalism and Bulgarian humorous history, I believe that he has the necessary pedagogical experience, knowledge and capacity for further academic development. Therefore, I will unreservedly vote for the award of the academic position of Associate Professor to Assistant Professor Dr. Yassen Borislavov Boychev in professional field 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences (Journalism - History of Bulgarian Journalism).**

**01 January 2020**

**Sofia**

**Prof. D.Sc. Lubomir Stoykov**