**REVIEW

By Prof. VESELIN KOSTOV YANCHEV, PhD
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for the materials submitted for participation in a competition for the academic position of "Associated Professor" in a professional field 2.2. History and archeology (New Bulgarian history (1878-1944 – Electoral Regulations and Elections in Bulgaria (first half of XX century), for the needs of Faculty of History at the Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”,
published in the State Gazette (issue 48 of June 28, 2022)

Documents for participation in the competition were submitted only by Chief Assistant PhD Svetoslav Mihaylov Zhivkov.

Svetoslav Zhivkov graduated in 2002 from the Faculty of History of the Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski" with a master's degree. His scientific ambitions are evident since his PhD thesis in 2010. It is dedicated to one of the key political parties in the new Bulgarian history - the Progressive-Liberal Party and examines its development from its creation in 1899 till 1915.

Since 2007, St. Zhivkov is a part-time assistant, since 2010 an assistant, and since 2011 a chief assistant in New Bulgarian History at the Faculty of History of Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski". As an assistant, he is engaged with seminars, lectures and specialized courses.

Very quickly, Dr. Zhivkov established himself as a competent teacher and lecturer and as an active participant and organizer of the scientific life in the Faculty of History and in the University. He is a scientific supervisor, consultant and reviewer of master's theses and diploma theses, takes part in a number of national and international conferences. He is a coordinator of and participant in 7 scientific and educational projects, a sought-after consultant and expert.

All these activities are based on a very serious scientific research in a wide chronological scope and on a variety of topics, resulting in 27 scientific publications - monographs, studies and articles. For the participation in the competition for associate professor, the candidate submits 2 monographs and 13 studies and articles, which are different from those presented to acquire the educational and scientific PhD degree. They exceed the minimum scientific requirements laid down in the current Law on the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria.

The presented scientific production can be conditionally divided into 3 categories:

1. *Publications related to the issues of the dissertation work*

After his PhD, Sv. Zhivkov continued with publications related to various aspects of the history and political activity of the Progressive-Liberal Party. In 2014, his monograph "The Progressive-Liberal Party in Bulgaria: We Don’t Make Politics with Russia! (1899–1920)" was published. This is the first comprehensive study, analyzing in detail all aspects of the organizational, ideological and political presence of this extremely Russophile party in the Bulgarian political life. The research is built on a rich and mostly unknown archive material. The approach employed here will become the author's trademark in the presentation, analysis and evaluation of historical events and processes. This is an interdisciplinary approach combining political, historical, demographic and statistical methods.

1. *Publications dedicated to Bulgarian statehood and professional representations*

In this area, Sv. Zhivkov's studies and articles are co-authored, which testify to his abilities for co-working. They study the state policy regarding cultural heritage from 1878 to 1989, the biographies of the presidents of the Supreme Bar Council in the period 1925–1944, and the role of lawyers in saving Bulgarian Jews.

1. *Publications dedicated to electoral rights, electoral legislation and elections in Bulgaria*

For about 15 years, Sv. Zhivkov's research focus has been on an explored, but still far from exhausted, topic - the election process in the country. With enviable consistency and persistence, he dedicated his efforts to the study of its different aspects, which he summarized in his habilitation work: "Proportional representation. Elections and electoral legislation in Bulgaria on the eve of the First World War".

The monograph is built on a solid documentary basis and uses the existing historiography, both Bulgarian and foreign. Zhivkov’s attitude is respectful, but also polemical - critical. The purpose of the study is to trace and analyze the introduction of the proportional electoral system in Bulgaria and its functioning from the moment the question was first raised in the Bulgarian public space until the beginning of the Great War. It is logical and well-founded.

 The exposition goes back quite far in time, but this stems from the author's desire to get to the roots and present the evolution of the idea and practice of proportional representation on a global scale, with a view to highlighting the place of the Bulgarian model. Putting the question of the proportion between idealism and justice on the one hand and pragmatism and party interests on the other when imposing the proportional electoral system, gives a sense of realism that will be built on in the following pages. One more part of the monograph plays the role of introduction - the one that describes in detail the functioning of the majoritarian electoral system in Bulgaria with its positives but also negatives that produce disproportionality. It is the existing disproportionate representation at the local and central level, according to the author, that will initially cause a debate, and then prompt specific legislative measures to change the majoritarian system. Several main conclusions are presented by Zhivkov - by 1908, most Bulgarian parties agreed with and supported the introduction of the proportional system as a part of the modernization and institutional development of the Bulgarian state.

The main emphasis of the study is on the reforms in the electoral legislation from 1909 to 1912 under the ruling of the Democratic and the People's and Progressive-Liberal parties. The root causes, the positions of the party headquarters, the debates in the plenary hall and the concrete results are thoroughly and objectively presented. The study examines the evolution in the support of the political entities and public organizations for the imposition of the proportional model - initially "experimentally" in the elections for city and county councils, then partially or in a mixed way (for two counties) and finally fully in the parliamentary elections. The conduct of the elections themselves according to the new rules is also presented. Zhivkov notes that along with the intention to ensure representativeness of the opposition groups, the aim is also to guarantee parliamentary seats for their leaders, at least in the first stage of the reform. Dissatisfaction with the mixed system, according to him, led to consensus for the introduction of the fully proportional one for elections to all types of representative bodies. This consensus is an expression of the parties' idealism and desire for pro-Western modernity, seen as a condition for their fairer representation and elimination of the "personal regime" of the monarch, but also a manifestation of their will to achieve their own organizational strengthening and the imposition of a kind of partocracy, instead of true democracy. As an additional motive, Zhivkov points out the concerns of the bourgeois camp about the growing influence of the Bulgarian Agricultural People's Union. The elections for the 16th and 17th Ordinary National Assembly are studied – these elections, apart from being the first to show the advantages and disadvantages of the new electoral rules, were used to dispel the myths accumulated over the years on the elections’ conduct.

The study uses scientific language but is easy readable. It is original, with serious scientific contributions, without any elements of plagiarism.

In conclusion, I am fully convinced that the demonstrated teaching and research qualities and skills of Svetoslav Zhivkov fully meets the requirements for holding the competitive academic position "Associated Professor", in a professional field 2.2. History and Archeology (New Bulgarian History (1878 - 1944)).

Sofia, October 15, 2022 **Reviewer: Prof. Veselin Yanchev, PhD**

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