

Statement

by Assoc. Prof. Iassen Zahariev Zahariev, Department of Philosophy and Sociology, New Bulgarian University

on

the competition for occupation of the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the scientific specialty 3.5 Public Communications and Information Sciences (Journalism. History of Bulgarian Journalism), announced in the State Gazette, 65, August 16, 2019, with candidate Senior Assistant Yassen Boichev Borislavov

I. Assessment of the minimum national requirements

The information provided shows that the candidate meets the standards of the minimum national requirements for the academic position of Associate Professor in Professional field 3.5 Media and Public Communications. The candidate has the required number of points in all groups of indicators in accordance with the requirements for participation in a contest under the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Rules for the Conditions and Procedures for Acquiring Degrees and Occupation of Academic Positions.

II. Research / Creative work and results

The candidate's research and studies can be summarized in three thematic areas – study on laughter, history of Bulgarian journalism, wine and culinary arts. I will consider them in the given order paying more attention to the first of them because it is related most to the competition.

1. The main monograph submitted in relation to the competition is "The Bulgarian satirical-humorous periodicals between the two world wars", published in 2019. The book is preceded by the study "The political change in the Bulgarian humorous periodicals between the two world wars" (2018), subsequently remaining part of the monograph. The monograph is also in logical relation to the book "Natural History in Bulgarian Laughing from Ivan Bogrov to" Bulgarian "(2014). Yassen Borislavov also has a number of articles in scientific and popular publications. All this reveals a lasting and serious interest in the topic of laughter and its public dimensions.

If we examine Borislavov's work on this topic, there are at least four impressive features and contributions to the scientific field and to Bulgarian culture in general.

The first one is the mastery and the commitment of Borislavov in exploration of the historical sources and archives. To execute a research over more than 60 Bulgarian periodicals from the

first half of the last century is a titanic work. Many years of hard scientific and archival research lay behind the clear and compelling narrative in Borislavov's works.

The second feature is the reflexive use of the term "laughter". Borislavov explores the phenomena of "laughter" not only historically but also in a philosophical manner. The laughable requires certain context and understanding in order to be meaningful. In this way, something that is funny at a certain time and place, could be serious at another time and another place. Borislavov's research is reflexive concerning the concept itself, which is contextual and ambivalent. Borislavov's research on laughter is not abstract and out of context. On the contrary, it emerged from the heterogeneity and historicity of laughter and set itself the goal of finding a specific "Bulgarian laughter" in the period considered. In order to do this, Borislavov analyzes the forms that introduce and flesh out the meaning and link to laughter such as satire, parody, caricature, and pun. In relation to the content Borislavov has two main categories of "funny" – the political laughter and the entertaining laughter of the boulevard, which draws its materials and inspiration from everyday life and passions of the Bulgarian. I can say with a certain satisfaction as a reader that this goal has been achieved. It goes beyond the specific historical period that gives understanding on various phenomena that can be laughed about today.

The third feature of all Borislavov's works is the interdisciplinary approach. Laughter is used as a framework of understanding of the Bulgarian reality not only from the interwar period. Borislavov demonstrates a broad and profound knowledge of the cultural, political and social history of Bulgaria. This is the broad horizon of interpretation of laughter presented in specific journalistic forms. Thus, Borislavov's study describes and analyzes not the "Bulgarian laughter" only but gives a broader understanding of Bulgarian culture in general.

The fourth feature is the witty and ironic style of Borislavov. A sense of humor and irony since the time of Socrates has been a sure sign of understanding and breadth in knowledge. In connection with that style, I would like to mention Borislavov works dedicated to wine and cuisine. A specific illustration of this relation between the "Bulgarian Laughter" and these works is the book with culinary sketches "Beans and Metaphysics".

2. The second thematic field in which Borislavov's research is situated is the history of Bulgarian journalism. The articles and research on this topic are exemplary, with the most significant of them – the 2010 monograph "Bulgarian journalism between the two world wars (1919-1939)". Here again we can see Borislavov's talent to work with various historical sources and archival materials. The results of the studies on the history of Bulgarian journalism are of a great value, since they show many important links between the content and style of different periodicals of the first half of the century and the formation of public opinion in Bulgarian society. Of particular importance are the studies devoted to the first journalistic organizations in Bulgaria and to the periodization of the history of Bulgarian journalism.

3. The third thematic field is wine and cuisine. Borislavov is the most respected Bulgarian wine journalist in the last quarter of the century. I can say this with a great deal of confidence, as I venture into the same field myself having a long-standing view of Bulgarian wine writings. Borislavov is the author of the only Bulgarian wine encyclopedia, reprinted three times since 2004. In this thematic area, Borislavov demonstrates the ability to connect, analyze and highlight important historical and social issues. The culinary page of the candidate in one of the Bulgarian daily newspapers is an inspiration and joy for many readers from the end of the 1990s to the present.

In addition to the three thematic fields outlined, a few words should be said about Borislavov's articles related to current public issues. Borislavov shows good expertise, critical attitude and a clear position, which, although not directly related to the competition, deserve to be mentioned with admirations.

III. Conclusion:

Considering the above, I firmly believe that Yassen Boychev Borislavov's application for the post of Associate Professor in the field 3.5 Public Communications and Information Sciences (Journalism. History of Bulgarian Journalism) is more than convincing, which is why I fully support it.

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/ Assoc. Prof. Iassen Zahariev, PhD /